

2008-Eckhart Tolle Oprah A New Earth Audiobook Podcast Chapter02

[Speaker 1] (0:00 - 59:35)

Chapter 2 Ego, the current state of humanity. Words, no matter whether they are vocalized and made into sounds or remain unspoken as thoughts, can cast an almost hypnotic spell upon you. You easily lose yourself in them, become hypnotized into implicitly believing that when you have attached a word to something you know what it is.

The fact is, you don't know what it is. You have only covered up the mystery with a label. Everything, a bird, a tree, even a simple stone, and certainly a human being, is ultimately unknowable.

This is because it has unfathomable depths. All we can perceive, think about, is the surface layer of reality, less than the tip of an iceberg. Underneath the surface appearance, everything is not only connected with everything else, but also with the source of all life out of which it came.

Even a stone, and more easily a flower or a bird, could show you the way back to God, to the source, to yourself. When you look at it or hold it and let it be, without imposing a word or mental label on it, a sense of awe, of wonder arises within you. Its essence silently communicates itself to you and reflects your own essence back to you.

This is what great artists sense and succeed in conveying in their art. Van Gogh didn't say, That's just an old chair. He looked and looked and looked.

He sensed the beingness of the chair. Then he sat in front of the canvas and took up the brush. The chair itself would have sold for the equivalent of a few dollars.

The painting of that same chair today would fetch an excess of twenty-five million dollars. When you don't cover up the world with words and labels, a sense of the miraculous returns to your life that was lost a long time ago when humanity, instead of using thought, became possessed by thought. A depth returns to your life.

Things regain their newness, their freshness. And the greatest miracle is the experiencing of your essential self as prior to any words, thoughts, mental labels and images. For this to happen, you need to disentangle your sense of I, of beingness, from all the things it has become mixed up with, that is to say, identified with.

That disentanglement is what this book is about. The quicker you are in attaching verbal or mental labels to things, people or situations, the more shallow and lifeless your reality becomes, and the more deadened you become to reality, the miracle of life that continuously unfolds within and around you. In this way, cleverness may be gained, but

wisdom is lost, and so are joy, love, creativity and aliveness.

They are concealed in the still gap between the perception and the interpretation. Of course we have to use words and thoughts. They have their own beauty.

But do we need to become imprisoned in them? Words reduce reality to something the human mind can grasp, which isn't very much. Language consists of five basic sounds produced by the vocal cords.

They are the vowels, A, E, I, O, U. The other sounds are consonants produced by air pressure, S, F, G, and so on. Do you believe some combination of such basic sounds could ever explain who you are, or the ultimate purpose of the universe, or even what a tree or stone is in its depths?

The illusory self. The word I embodies the greatest error and the deepest truth, depending on how it is used. In conventional usage, it is not only one of the most frequently used words in the language, together with the related words me, my, mine, and myself, but also one of the most misleading.

In normal everyday usage, I embodies the primordial error, a misperception of who you are, an illusory sense of identity. This is the ego. This illusory sense of self is what Albert Einstein, who had deep insights not only into the reality of space and time, but also into human nature, referred to as an optical illusion of consciousness.

That illusory self then becomes the basis for all further interpretations, or rather misinterpretations of reality, all thought processes, interactions, and relationships. Your reality becomes a reflection of the original illusion. If you can recognize illusion as illusion, it dissolves.

The recognition of illusion is also its ending. Its survival depends on your mistaking it for reality. In the seeing of who you are not, the reality of who you are emerges by itself.

This is what happens as you slowly and carefully read this and the next chapter, which are about the mechanics of the false self we call the ego. So what is the nature of this illusory self? What you usually refer to when you say I is not who you are.

By a monstrous act of reductionism, the infinite depth of who you are is confused with the sound produced by the vocal chords, or the thought of I in your mind, and whatever the I has identified with. So what do the usual I and the related me, my, or mine refer to? When a young child learns that a sequence of sounds produced by the parent's vocal chords is his or her name, the child begins to equate a word, which in the mind becomes a thought, with who he or she is.

At that stage, some children refer to themselves in the third person. Johnny is hungry. Soon after, they learn the magic word I and equate it with their name, which they have

already equated with who they are.

Then other thoughts come and merge with the original I thought. The next step are thoughts of me and mine to designate things that are somehow part of I. This is identification with objects, which means investing things, but ultimately thoughts that represent things, with a sense of self, thereby deriving an identity from them.

When my toy breaks or is taken away, intense suffering arises. Not because of any intrinsic value that the toy has—the child will soon lose interest in it, and it will be replaced by other toys, other objects—but because of the thought of mine. The toy became part of the child's developing sense of self, of I.

And so as the child grows up, the original I thought attracts other thoughts to itself. It becomes identified with a gender, possessions, the sense-perceived body, the nationality, race, religion, profession. Other things the I identifies with are roles, mother, father, husband, wife, and so on, accumulated knowledge or opinions, likes and dislikes, and also things that happened to me in the past, the memory of which are thoughts that further define my sense of self as me and my story.

These are only some of the things people derive their sense of identity from. They are ultimately no more than thoughts held together precariously by the fact that they are all invested with a sense of self. This mental construct is what you normally refer to when you say I.

To be more precise, most of the time it is not you who speaks when you say or think I, but some aspect of that mental construct, the egoic self. Once you awaken, you still use the word I, but it will come from a deeper place within yourself. Most people are still completely identified with the incessant stream of mind, of compulsive thinking, most of it repetitive and pointless.

There is no I apart from their thought processes and the emotions that go with them. This is the meaning of being spiritually unconscious. When told that there is a voice in their head that never stops speaking, they say, What voice?

or angrily deny it, which, of course, is the voice, is the thinker, is the unobserved mind. It could almost be looked upon as an entity that has taken possession of them. Some people never forget the first time they disidentified from their thoughts and thus briefly experience the shift in identity from being the content of their mind to being the awareness in the background.

For others it happens in such a subtle way they hardly notice it, or they just notice an influx of joy or inner peace without knowing the reason. That first glimpse of awareness came to me when I was a first-year student at the University of London. I would take the tube, the subway, twice a week to go to the university library, usually around nine

o'clock in the morning, towards the end of the rush hour.

One time a woman in her early thirties sat opposite me. I had seen her before a few times on that train. One could not help but notice her.

Although the train was full, the seats on either side of her were unoccupied, the reason being, no doubt, that she appeared to be quite insane. She looked extremely tense and talked to herself incessantly in a loud and angry voice. She was so absorbed in her thoughts that she was totally unaware, it seemed, of other people or her surroundings.

Her head was facing downward and slightly to the left, as if she were addressing someone sitting in the empty seat next to her. Although I don't remember the precise content, her monologue went something like this. .

. . And then she said to me, so I said to her, You are a liar!

How dare you accuse me of . . .

when you are the one who has always taken advantage of me? I trusted you, and you betrayed my trust. There was the angry tone in her voice of someone who has been wronged, who needs to defend her position lest she become annihilated.

As the train approached Tottenham Court Road station she stood up and walked towards the door with still no break in the stream of words coming out of her mouth. That was my stop too, so I got off behind her. At street level she began to walk towards Bedford Square, still engaged in her imaginary dialogue, still angrily accusing and asserting her position.

My curiosity aroused, I decided to follow her as long as she was walking in the same general direction I had to go in. Although engrossed in her imaginary dialogue she seemed to know where she was going. Soon we were within sight of the imposing structure of Senate House, a 1930s high-rise, the University's central administrative building and library.

I was shocked. Was it possible that we were going to the same place? Yes, that's where she was heading.

Was she a teacher, a student, an office worker, a librarian? Maybe she was some psychologist's research project. I never knew the answer.

I walked twenty steps behind her and by the time I entered the building, which ironically was the location of the headquarters of the Mind Police in the film version of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, she had already been swallowed up by one of the elevators. I was somewhat taken aback by what I had just witnessed. A mature first-year student at twenty-five, I saw myself as an intellectual in the making, and I was convinced

that all the answers to the dilemmas of human existence could be found through the intellect, that is to say, by thinking.

I didn't realize yet that thinking without awareness is the main dilemma of human existence. I looked upon the professors as sages who had all the answers, and upon the University as the temple of knowledge. How could an insane person like her be part of this?

I was still thinking about her when I was in the men's room prior to entering the library. As I was washing my hands, I thought, I hope I don't end up like her. The man next to me looked briefly in my direction, and I suddenly was shocked when I realized that I hadn't just thought those words, but mumbled them aloud.

Oh my God, I'm already like her, I thought. Wasn't my mind as incessantly active as hers? There were only minor differences between us.

The predominant underlying emotion behind her thinking seemed to be anger. In my case it was mostly anxiety. She thought out loud, I thought mostly in my head.

If she was mad, then everyone was mad, including myself. There were differences in degree only. For a moment I was able to stand back from my own mind and see it from a deeper perspective, as it were.

There was a brief shift from thinking to awareness. I was still in the men's room, but alone now, looking at my face in the mirror. At that moment of detachment from my mind, I laughed out loud.

It may have sounded insane, but it was the laughter of sanity, the laughter of the big-bellied Buddha. As my mind makes it out to be, that's what the laughter seemed to be saying. But it was only a glimpse, very quickly to be forgotten.

I would spend the next three years in anxiety and depression, completely identified with my mind. I had to get close to suicide before awareness returned. And then it was much more than a glimpse.

I became free of compulsive thinking and of the false, mind-made I. The above incident not only gave me a first glimpse of awareness, it also planted the first doubt as to the absolute validity of the human intellect. A few months later something tragic happened that made my doubt grow.

On a Monday morning we arrived for a lecture to be given by a professor whose mind I admired greatly, only to be told that sadly he had committed suicide sometime during the weekend by shooting himself. I was stunned. He was a highly respected teacher and seemed to have all the answers.

However, I could as yet see no alternative to the cultivation of thought. I didn't realize yet that thinking is only a tiny aspect of the consciousness that we are. Nor did I know anything about the ego, let alone being able to detect it within myself.

Content and Structure of the Ego The egoic mind is completely conditioned by the past. Its conditioning is twofold. It consists of content and structure.

In the case of a child who cries in deep suffering because his toy has been taken away, the toy represents content. It is interchangeable with any other content, any other toy or object. The content you identify with is conditioned by your environment, your upbringing, and surrounding culture.

Whether the child is rich or poor, whether the toy is a piece of wood shaped like an animal or sophisticated electronic gadget, makes no difference as far as the suffering caused by its loss is concerned. The reason why such acute suffering occurs is concealed in the word "my", and it is structural. The unconscious compulsion to enhance one's identity through association with an object is built into the very structure of the egoic mind.

One of the most basic mind structures through which the ego comes into existence is identification. The word identification is derived from the Latin word *idem*, meaning same, and *facere*, which means to make. So when I identify with something, I make it the same.

The same as what? The same as I. I endow it with a sense of self, and so it becomes part of my identity.

One of the most basic levels of identification is with things. My toy later becomes my car, my house, my clothes, and so on. I try to find myself in things but never quite make it, and end up losing myself in them.

That is the fate of the ego. Identification with things. The people in the advertising industry know very well that in order to sell things that people don't really need, they must convince them that those things will add something to how they see themselves or are seen by others, in other words, add something to their sense of self.

They do this, for example, by telling you that you will stand out from the crowd by using this product and so by implication be more fully yourself. Or they may create an association in your mind between the product and a famous person, or youthful, attractive, or happy-looking person. Even pictures of old or deceased celebrities in their prime work well for that purpose.

The unspoken assumption is that by buying this product, through some magical act of appropriation, you become like them, or rather the surface image of them. And so in many cases you are not buying a product but an identity enhancer. Designer labels are

primarily collective identities that you buy into.

They are expensive and therefore exclusive. If everybody could buy them, they would lose their psychological value and all you would be left with would be their material value, which likely amounts to a fraction of what you paid. What you identify with will vary from person to person according to age, gender, income, social class, fashion, the surrounding culture, and so on.

What you identify with is all to do with content, whereas the unconscious compulsion to identify is structural. It is one of the most basic ways in which the egoic mind operates. Paradoxically, what keeps the so-called consumer society going is the fact that trying to find yourself through things doesn't work.

The ego satisfaction is short-lived and so you keep looking for more, keep buying, keep consuming. Of course, in this physical dimension that our surface selves inhabit, things are a necessary and inescapable part of our lives. We need housing, clothes, furniture, tools, transportation.

There may also be things in our lives that we value because of their beauty or inherent quality. We need to honor the world of things, not despise it. Each thing has beingness, is a temporary form that has its origin within the formless one life, the source of all things, all bodies, all forms.

In most ancient cultures people believed that everything, even so-called inanimate objects, had an indwelling spirit, and in this respect they were closer to the truth than we are today. When you live in a world deadened by mental abstraction you don't sense the aliveness of the universe anymore. Most people don't inhabit a living reality but a conceptualized one.

But we cannot really honor things if we use them as a self-enhancement, that is to say if we try to find ourselves through them. This is exactly what the ego does. Ego identification with things creates attachment to things, obsession with things, which in turn creates our consumer society and economic structures where the only measure of progress is always more.

The unchecked striving for more, for endless growth, is a dysfunction and a disease. It is the same dysfunction the cancerous cell manifests whose only goal is to multiply itself, unaware that it is bringing about its own destruction by destroying the organism of which it is a part. Some economists are so attached to the notion of growth that they can't let go of that word, so they refer to recession as a time of negative growth.

A large part of many people's lives is consumed by an obsessive preoccupation with things. This is why one of the ills of our times is object proliferation. When you can no longer feel the life that you are, you are likely to try to fill up your life with things.

As a spiritual practice I suggest that you investigate your relationship with the world of things through self-observation, and in particular things that are designated with the word "my". You need to be alert and honest to find out, for example, whether your sense of self-worth is bound up with things you possess. Do certain things induce a subtle feeling of importance or superiority?

Does the lack of them make you feel inferior to others who have more than you? Do you casually mention things you own or show them off to increase your sense of worth in someone else's eyes and through them in your own? Do you feel resentful or angry and somehow diminished in your sense of self when someone else has more than you, or when you lose a prized possession?

When I was seeing people as a counsellor and spiritual teacher, I would visit a woman twice a week whose body was riddled with cancer. She was a schoolteacher in her mid-forties and had been given no more than a few months to live by her doctors. Sometimes a few words were spoken during those visits, but mostly we would sit together in silence, and as we did, she had her first glimpses of the stillness within herself that she never knew existed during her busy life as a schoolteacher.

One day, however, I arrived to find her in a state of great distress and anger. What happened? I asked.

Her diamond ring of great monetary as well as sentimental value had disappeared, and she said she was sure it had been stolen by the woman who came to look after her for a few hours every day. She said she didn't understand how anybody could be so callous and heartless as to do this to her. She asked me whether she should confront the woman or whether it would be better to call the police immediately.

I said I couldn't tell her what to do, but asked her to find out how important a ring or anything else was at this point in her life. You don't understand, she said. This was my grandmother's ring.

I used to wear it every day until I got ill and my hands became too swollen. It's more than just a ring to me. How can I not be upset?

Anger and defensiveness in her voice were indications that she had not yet become present enough to look within and to disentangle her reaction from the event and observe them both. Her anger and defensiveness were signs that the eager was still speaking through her. I said, I'm going to ask you a few questions, but instead of answering them now, see if you can find the answers within you.

I will pause briefly after each question. When an answer comes, it may not necessarily come in the form of words. She said she was ready to listen.

I asked, do you realize that you will have to let go of the ring at some point, perhaps

quite soon? How much more time do you need before you will be ready to let go of it? Will you become less when you let go of it?

Has who you are become diminished by the loss? There were a few minutes of silence after the last question. When she started speaking again, there was a smile on her face and she seemed at peace.

She said, the last question made me realize something important. First I went to my mind for an answer and my mind said, yes, of course you've been diminished. Then I asked myself the question again, has who I am become diminished?

This time I tried to feel rather than think the before. If I can feel the I am so strongly, then who I am hasn't been diminished at all. I can still feel it now, something peaceful but very alive.

That is the joy of being, I said. You can only feel it when you get out of your head. Being must be felt.

It can't be thought. The ego doesn't know about it because thought is what it consists of. The ring was really in your head as a thought that you confused with the sense of I am.

You thought the I am or part of it was in the ring. Whatever the ego seeks and gets attached to are substitutes for the being that it cannot feel. You can value and care for things, but whenever you get attached to them, you will know it's the ego.

And you are never really attached to a thing but to a thought that has I, me or mine in it. Whenever you completely accept a loss, you go beyond ego and who you are, the I am which is consciousness itself, emerges. She said, now I understand something Jesus said that never made much sense to me before.

If someone takes your shirt, let him have your coat as well. That's right, I said. It doesn't mean you should never lock your door.

All it means is that sometimes letting things go is an act of far greater power than defending or hanging on. In the last few weeks of her life, as her body became weaker, she became more and more radiant, as if light were shining through her. She gave many of her possessions away, some to the woman she thought had stolen the ring, and with each thing she gave away, her joy deepened.

When her mother called me to let me know she had passed away, she also mentioned that after her death they found her ring in the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. Did the woman return the ring, or had it been there all the time? Nobody will ever know.

One thing we do know. Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need?

Because this is the experience you are having at this moment. Is it wrong then to be proud of one's possessions or to feel resentful towards people who have more than you? Not at all.

That sense of pride, of needing to stand out, the apparent enhancement of oneself through more than and diminishment through less than, is neither right nor wrong. It is the ego. The ego isn't wrong.

It's just unconscious. When you observe the ego in yourself, you are beginning to go beyond it. Don't take the ego too seriously.

When you detect egoic behaviour in yourself, smile. At times you may even laugh. How could humanity have been taken in by this for so long?

Above all, know that the ego isn't personal. It isn't who you are. If you consider the ego to be your personal problem, that's just more ego.

End of Disc 1 To own something, what does it really mean? What does it mean to make something mine? If you stand in a street in New York, point to a huge skyscraper and say, that building is mine, I own it, you're either very wealthy or you're a delusional or a liar.

In any case, you're telling a story in which the thought-form I and the thought-form building merge into one. That's how the mental concept of ownership works. If everybody agrees with your story, there will be signed pieces of paper to certify their agreement with it.

You're wealthy. If nobody agrees with the story, they will send you to a psychiatrist. You're a delusional or compulsive liar.

It is important to recognize here that the story and the thought-forms that make up the story, whether people agree with it or not, have absolutely nothing to do with who you are. Even if people agree with it, it is ultimately a fiction. Many people don't realize until they are on their deathbed and everything external falls away, that no thing ever had anything to do with who they are.

In the proximity of death, the whole concept of ownership stands revealed as ultimately meaningless. In the last moments of their life, they then also realize that while they were looking throughout their lives for a more complete sense of self, what they were really looking for, their being, had actually always already been there, but had been largely obscured by their identification with things, which ultimately means identification with their mind. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Jesus said, for theirs will be the kingdom of heaven.

What does poor in spirit mean? No inner baggage, no identifications, not with things, nor

with any mental concepts that have a sense of self in them. And what is the kingdom of heaven?

The simple but profound joy of being that is there when you let go of identifications and so become poor in spirit. This is why renouncing all possessions has been an ancient spiritual practice in both East and West. Renunciation of possessions, however, will not automatically free you of the ego.

It will attempt to ensure its survival by finding something else to identify with. For example, the mental image of yourself as someone who has transcended all interest in material possessions, and is therefore superior, is more spiritual than others. There are people who have renounced all possessions but have a bigger ego than some millionaires.

If you take away one kind of identification, the ego will quickly find another. It ultimately doesn't mind what it identifies with as long as it has an identity. Anti-consumerism or anti-private ownership would be another thought-form, another mental position that can replace identification with possessions.

Through it you could make yourself right and others wrong. As we shall see later, making yourself right and others wrong is one of the principal egoic mind patterns, one of the main forms of unconsciousness. In other words, the content of the ego may change, the mind-structure that keeps it alive does not.

One of the unconscious assumptions is that by identifying with an object through the fiction of ownership, the apparent solidity and permanency of that material object will endow your sense of self with greater solidity and permanency. This applies particularly to buildings and even more so to land, since it is the only thing you think you can own that cannot be destroyed. The absurdity of owning something becomes even more apparent in the case of land.

In the days of the White Settlement the natives of North America found ownership of land an incomprehensible concept, and so they lost it when the Europeans made them sign pieces of paper that were equally incomprehensible to them. They felt they belonged to the land, but the land did not belong to them. The ego tends to equate having with being.

I have, therefore I am. And the more I have, the more I am. The ego lives through comparison.

How you are seen by others turns into how you see yourself. If everyone lived in a mansion or everyone was wealthy, your mansion or your wealth would no longer serve to enhance your sense of self. You could then move to a simple cabin, give up your wealth and regain an identity by seeing yourself and being seen as more spiritual than others.

How you are seen by others becomes the mirror that tells you what you are like and who you are. The ego's sense of self-worth is in most cases bound up with the worth you have in the eyes of others. You need others to give you a sense of self, and if you live in a culture that to a large extent equates self-worth with how much and what you have, if you cannot look through this collective delusion, you will be condemned to chasing after things for the rest of your life in the vain hope of finding your worth and completion of your sense of self there.

TOUCHMENT TO THINGS Don't even try. It's impossible. Attachment to things drops away by itself when you no longer seek to find yourself in them.

In the meantime, just be aware of your attachment to things. Sometimes you may not know that you are attached to something, which is to say identified, until you lose it or there is a threat of loss. If you then become upset, anxious, and so on, it means you are attached.

If you are aware that you are identified with a thing, the identification is no longer total. I am the awareness that is aware that there is attachment. That's the beginning of the transformation of consciousness.

WANTING THE NEED FOR MORE The ego identifies with having, but its satisfaction in having is a relatively shallow and short-lived one. Concealed within it remains a deep-seated sense of dissatisfaction, of incompleteness, of not enough. I don't have enough yet, by which the ego really means, I am not enough yet.

As we have seen, having, the concept of ownership, is a fiction created by the ego to give itself solidity and permanency and make itself stand out, make itself special. Since you cannot find yourself through having, however, there is another more powerful drive underneath it that pertains to the structure of the ego, the need for more, which we could also call wanting. No ego can last for long without the need for more.

Therefore, wanting keeps the ego alive much more than having. The ego wants to want more than it wants to have, and so the shallow satisfaction of having is always replaced by more wanting. This is the psychological need for more, that is to say, more things to identify with.

It is an addictive need, not an authentic one. In some cases, the psychological need for more or the feeling of not enough that is so characteristic of the ego becomes transferred to the physical level and so turns into insatiable hunger. The sufferers of bulimia will often make themselves vomit so that they can continue eating.

Their mind is hungry, not their body. This eating disorder would become healed if the sufferers, instead of being identified with their mind, could get in touch with their body and so feel the true needs of the body rather than the pseudo-needs of the egoic mind.

Some egos know what they want and pursue their aim with grim and ruthless determination, Genghis Khan, Stalin, Hitler, to give just a few larger-than-life examples.

The energy behind their wanting, however, creates an opposing energy of equal intensity, which in the end leads to their downfall. In the meantime they make themselves and many others unhappy or, in the larger-than-life examples, create hell on earth. Most egos have conflicting wants.

They want different things at different times or may not even know what they want except that they don't want what is, the present moment. Unease, restlessness, boredom, anxiety, dissatisfaction are the result of unfulfilled wanting. Wanting is structural, so no amount of content can provide lasting fulfillment as long as that mental structure remains in place.

Intense wanting that has no specific object can often be found in the still-developing ego of teenagers, some of whom are in a permanent state of negativity and dissatisfaction. The physical needs for food, water, shelter, clothing and basic comforts could be easily met for all humans on the planet, were it not for the imbalance of resources created by the insane and rapacious need for more, the greed of the ego. It finds collective expression in the economic structures of this world, such as the huge corporations, which are egoic entities that compete with each other for more.

Their only blind aim is profit. They pursue that aim with absolute ruthlessness. Nature, animals, people, even their own employees are no more than digits on a balance sheet, lifeless objects to be used, then discarded.

The thought-forms of me and mine, of more than, of I want, I need, I must have, and of not enough, pertain not to content, but to the structure of the ego. The content is interchangeable. As long as you don't recognize those thought-forms within yourself, as long as they remain unconscious, you will believe in what they say.

You will be condemned to acting out those unconscious thoughts, condemned to seeking and not finding. Because when those thought-forms operate, no possession, place, person or condition will ever satisfy you. No content will satisfy you as long as the egoic structure remains in place.

No matter what you have or get, you won't be happy. You will always be looking for something else that promises greater fulfillment, that promises to make your incomplete sense of self complete and fill that sense of lack you feel within. Apart from objects, another basic form of identification is with my body.

Firstly, the body is male or female, and so the sense of being a man or woman takes up a significant part of most people's sense of self. Gender becomes identity. Identification with gender is encouraged at an early age, and it forces you into a role, into conditioned

patterns of behavior that affect all aspects of your life, not just sexuality.

It is a role many people become completely trapped in, even more so in some of the traditional societies than in Western culture, where identification with gender is beginning to lessen somewhat. In some traditional cultures, the worst fate a woman can have is to be unwed or barren, and for a man to lack sexual potency and not be able to produce children. Life's fulfillment is perceived to be fulfillment of one's gender identity.

In the West, it is the physical appearance of the body that contributes greatly to the sense of who you think you are, its strength or weakness, its perceived beauty or ugliness relative to others. For many people, their sense of self-worth is intimately bound up with their physical strength, good looks, fitness, and external appearance. Many feel a diminished sense of self-worth because they perceive their body as ugly or imperfect.

In some cases, the mental image or concept of my body is a complete distortion of reality. A young woman may think of herself as overweight and therefore starve herself, when in fact she is quite thin. She cannot see her body anymore.

All she sees is the mental concept of her body, which says, I am fat or I will become fat. At the root of this condition lies identification with the mind. As people have become more and more mind-identified, which is the intensification of egoic dysfunction, there has also been a dramatic increase in the incidence of anorexia in recent decades.

If the sufferer could look at her body without the interfering judgments of her mind, or even recognize those judgments for what they are instead of believing in them, or better still, if she could feel her body from within, this would initiate her healing. Those who are identified with their good looks, physical strength, or abilities, experience suffering when those attributes begin to fade and disappear, as of course they will. Their very identity that was based on them is then threatened with collapse.

In either case, ugly or beautiful, people derive a significant part of their identity, be it negative or positive, from their body. To be more precise, they derive their identity from the I-thought that they erroneously attach to the mental image or concept of their body, which after all is no more than a physical form that shares the destiny of all forms, impermanence, and ultimately decay. Equating the physical sense-perceived body that is destined to grow old, wither, and die with I, always leads to suffering sooner or later.

To refrain from identifying with the body doesn't mean that you neglect, despise, or no longer care for it. If it is strong, beautiful, or vigorous, you can enjoy and appreciate those attributes while they last. You can also improve the body's condition through right nutrition and exercise.

If you don't equate the body with who you are, when beauty fades, vigor diminishes, or the body becomes incapacitated, this will not affect your sense of worth or identity in

any way. In fact, as the body begins to weaken, the formless dimension, the light of consciousness, can shine more easily through the fading form. It is not just people with good or near-perfect bodies who are likely to equate it with who they are.

You can just as easily identify with a problematic body and make the body's imperfection, illness, or disability into your identity. You may then think and speak of yourself as a sufferer of this or that chronic illness or disability. You receive a great deal of attention from doctors and others who constantly confirm to you your conceptual identity as a sufferer or patient.

You then unconsciously cling to the illness because it has become the most important part of who you perceive yourself to be. It has become another thought-form with which the ego can identify. Once the ego has found an identity, it does not want to let go.

Amazingly, but not infrequently, the ego in search of a stronger identity can and does create illnesses in order to strengthen itself through them. Although body identification is one of the most basic forms of ego, the good news is that it is also the one that you can most easily go beyond. This is done not by trying to convince yourself that you are not your body, but by shifting your attention from the external form of your body and from thoughts about your body—beautiful, ugly, strong, weak, too fat, too thin—to the feeling of aliveness inside it.

No matter what your body's appearance is on the outer level, beyond the outer form it is an intensely alive energy field. If you are not familiar with inner body awareness, close your eyes for a moment and find out if there is life inside your hands. Don't ask your mind.

It will say, I can't feel anything. Probably it will also say, give me something more interesting to think about. So instead of asking your mind, go to the hands directly.

By this I mean, become aware of the subtle feeling of aliveness inside them. It is there. You just have to go there with your attention to notice it.

You may get a slight tingling sensation at first, then a feeling of energy or aliveness. If you hold your attention in your hands for a while, the sense of aliveness will intensify. Some people won't even have to close their eyes.

They will be able to feel their inner hands at the same time as they read this. Then go to your feet, keep your attention there for a minute or so, and begin to feel your hands and feet at the same time. Then incorporate other parts of the body—legs, arms, abdomen, chest, and so on—into that feeling until you are aware of the inner body as a global sense of aliveness.

What I call the inner body isn't really the body anymore, but life energy, the bridge between form and formlessness. Make it a habit to feel the inner body as often as you

can. After a while, you won't need to close your eyes anymore to feel it.

For example, see if you can feel the inner body whenever you listen to someone. It almost seems like a paradox. When you are in touch with the inner body, you are not identified with your body anymore, nor are you identified with your mind.

This is to say, you are no longer identified with form, but moving away from form identification towards formlessness, which we may also call being. It is your essence identity. Body awareness not only anchors you in the present moment, it is a doorway out of the present that is the ego.

It also strengthens the immune system and the body's ability to heal itself—forgetfulness of being. Ego is always identification with form, seeking yourself and thereby losing yourself in some form. Forms are not just material objects and physical bodies.

More fundamental than the external forms, things and bodies, are the thought forms that continuously arise in the field of consciousness. They are energy formations, finer and less dense than physical matter, but they are forms, nonetheless. What you may be aware of as a voice in your head that never stops speaking is the stream of incessant and compulsive thinking.

When every thought absorbs your attention completely, when you are so identified with the voice in your head and the emotions that accompany it that you lose yourself in every thought and every emotion, then you are totally identified with form and therefore in the grip of ego. Ego is a conglomeration of recurring thought forms and conditioned mental-emotional patterns that are infested with a sense of I, a sense of self. Ego arises when your sense of beingness, of I am, which is formless consciousness, gets mixed up with form.

This is the meaning of identification. This is forgetfulness of being, the primary error, the illusion of absolute separateness that turns reality into a nightmare. To Sartre's Insight The seventeenth-century philosopher Descartes, regarded as the founder of modern philosophy, gave expression to this primary error with his famous dictum, which he saw as primary truth, I think, therefore I am.

This was the answer he found to the question, Is there anything I can know with absolute certainty? He realized that the fact that he was always thinking was beyond doubt, and so he equated thinking with being, that is to say, identity, I am, with thinking. Instead of the ultimate truth, he had found the root of the ego, but he didn't know that.

It took almost three hundred years before another famous philosopher saw something in that statement that Descartes, as well as everybody else, had overlooked. His name was Jean-Paul Sartre. He looked at Descartes' statement, I think, therefore I am, very deeply, and suddenly realized, in his own words, the consciousness that says I am is not the

consciousness that thinks.

What did he mean by that? When you are aware that you are thinking, that awareness is not part of thinking. It is a different dimension of consciousness.

And it is that awareness that says, I am. If there were nothing but thought in you, you wouldn't even know you're thinking. You would be like a dreamer who doesn't know he's dreaming.

You would be as identified with every thought as the dreamer is with every image in the dream. Many people still live like that, like sleepwalkers, trapped in old dysfunctional mindsets that continuously recreate the same nightmarish reality. When you know you are dreaming, you are awake within the dream.

Another dimension of consciousness has come in. The implication of Sartre's insight is profound, but he himself was still too identified with thinking to realize the full significance of what he had discovered. An emerging new dimension of consciousness, the peace that passes all understanding.

There are many accounts of people who experienced that emerging new dimension of consciousness as a result of tragic loss at some point in their lives. Some lost all of their possessions, others their children or spouse, their social position, reputation or physical abilities. In some cases, through disaster or war, they lost all of these simultaneously and found themselves with nothing.

We may call this a limit situation. Whatever they had identified with, whatever gave them their sense of self, had been taken away. Then, suddenly and inexplicably, the anguish or intense fear they initially felt gave way to a sacred sense of presence, a deep peace and serenity and complete freedom from fear.

This phenomenon must have been familiar to St. Paul who used the expression, the peace of God which passes all understanding. It is indeed a peace that doesn't seem to make sense, and the people who experienced it ask themselves, in the face of this, how can it be that I feel such peace? The answer is simple once you realize what the ego is and how it works.

When forms that you had identified with, that gave you your sense of self, collapse or are taken away, it can lead to a collapse of the ego, since ego is identification with form. When there's nothing to identify with anymore, who are you? When forms around you die or death approaches, your sense of beingness, of I am, is freed from its entanglement with form.

Spirit is released from its imprisonment in matter. You realize your essential identity as formless, as an all-pervasive presence, of being prior to all forms, all identifications. You realize your true identity as consciousness itself, rather than what consciousness had

identified with.

That's the peace of God. The ultimate truth of who you are is not I am this or I am that, but I am. Not everybody who experiences great loss also experiences this awakening, this disidentification from form.

Some immediately create a strong mental image or thought form in which they see themselves as a victim, whether it be of circumstances, other people, an unjust fate or God. This thought form and the emotions it creates, such as anger, resentment, self-pity and so on, they strongly identify with. And it immediately takes the place of all the other identifications that have collapsed through the loss.

In other words, the ego quickly finds a new form. The fact that this new form is a deeply unhappy one doesn't concern the ego too much, as long as it has an identity, good or bad. In fact, this new ego will be more contracted, more rigid and impenetrable than the old one.

Whenever tragic loss occurs, you either resist or you yield. Some people become bitter or deeply resentful. Others become compassionate, wise and loving.

Yielding means inner acceptance of what is. You are open to life. Resistance is an inner contraction, a hardening of the shell of the ego.

You are closed. Whatever action you take in a state of inner resistance, which we could also call negativity, will create more outer resistance and the universe will not be on your side. Life will not be helpful.

If the shutters are closed, the sunlight cannot come in. When you yield internally, when you surrender, a new dimension of consciousness opens up. If action is possible or necessary, your action will be in alignment with the whole and supported by creative intelligence, the unconditioned consciousness which in a state of inner openness you become one with.

Circumstances and people then become helpful, cooperative. Coincidences happen. If no action is possible, you rest in the peace and inner stillness that come with surrender.

You rest in God.

[Speaker 2] (59:51 - 1:01:02)

Along with a multitude of North Americans, we also have students registered in this class from countries like Afghanistan, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, Ireland, South Africa, and even a few of you from Zanzibar, I hear. Thank you. Since last week, 1,860,000 of you have streamed or downloaded our first class.

I just want you to know it's always available if this pioneering effort again tonight should

break up and we have webcast problems, you can go to oprah.com tomorrow or iTunes and begin streaming afternoon. Well, for the next nine weeks, author and spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle and I plan to be right here in our virtual classroom on oprah.com Monday nights at 8 p.m. central to discuss each chapter and talk with you about it. And you can type in your questions on the right side of your screen and send that to us instantly.

And throughout this class, we're going to also talk directly to students via Skype. So cool. Free software that allows you to make internet and video phone calls all over the world.

Welcome again, Eckhart Tolle.

[Speaker 1] (1:01:02 - 1:01:04)

Thank you. Thank you.

[Speaker 2] (1:01:04 - 1:01:33)

Well, last week, you shared with us how there are tools that we can use to bring ourselves into the present moment. And you were saying from that first chapter that and throughout this book that there is only the present moment. And you were saying that if we would allow ourselves to take ourselves out of our mind and just go to our breath, that that we could learn presence that way.

That's how you begin to learn presence.

[Speaker 1] (1:01:33 - 1:02:57)

Yes, yes. And I suggest that we all do that right now, which is to say, we are taking our attention right now, away from where it usually dwells, which is in the head and in the thinking mind. And we direct our attention to our breath.

And the simple question that one could ask is or you could ask yourself is, am I still breathing? Let's just check if I'm still breathing. Now, how do you find out whether you're still breathing?

You have to take your attention away from the thinking mind and sense yourself breathing right now. And as you're taking attention away from the thinking mind, which always works using past and future sustains itself by always generating past and future thinking. You also enter the present moment when you take attention away from thinking, direct attention to your breathing.

You're always breathing, but usually you're not aware of it. Right. And now we are bringing awareness to it, which means we are taking attention away from thinking.

So we are not losing consciousness. We are very conscious, but thinking much less or

perhaps not at all. So let's do this now.

This has never been done on television. It's unprecedented, but we can do it here.

[Speaker 2] (1:02:57 - 1:03:00)

Yes. Silence is usually not good on TV.

[Speaker 1] (1:03:00 - 1:03:01)

No.

[Speaker 2] (1:03:02 - 1:03:04)

But let's try it for the next 10 seconds.

[Speaker 1] (1:03:05 - 1:03:07)

Just be aware of yourself breathing.

[Speaker 2] (1:03:32 - 1:03:33)

I'm still alive.

[Speaker 1] (1:03:34 - 1:03:35)

Yes. I just checked in. Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:03:36 - 1:03:36)

Yes.

[Speaker 1] (1:03:37 - 1:03:48)

Perhaps even more alive than when you're engaged in thinking. There's a deeper sense of aliveness there that you're beginning to touch when you get in touch with that, these inner processes. Yeah.

[Speaker 2] (1:03:48 - 1:03:58)

I think that's pretty cool that all around the world and all of these different countries I just named that all of us come together in silence for a moment just to give our mind to break.

[Speaker 1] (1:03:58 - 1:03:59)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:03:59 - 1:04:50)

Yeah. Well, this is the most exciting chapter until you get to the next chapter. I think chapter two is the most exciting chapter.

As we said last week, chapter one is pretty conceptual. You would agree. Yes.

Even you're the one who wrote it. Yes. Pretty conceptual.

But in chapter two title, ego, the current state of humanity, we get into, I think, a way of understanding ourselves that perhaps so many people were not aware of until beginning to read this. So I would just like to just get right into this chapter. When you say when you don't cover up the world with words and labels, a sense of the miraculous returns to your life that was lost a long time ago when humanity, instead of using thought, became possessed by thought.

What do you mean by that?

[Speaker 1] (1:04:50 - 1:06:18)

Now, usually, and everybody can verify this in their own experience, we experience the phenomenal world, whatever we experience, we do not experience it directly. It is overlaid with self-talk, which are the mental processes. So as you go about your life, you encounter situations, you meet people, you do your work, and most of the time there is a voice in the head, which can be called the self-talk, it can be called the inner voice, but it is the conditioned thought processes.

And they are commenting and interpreting and mentally labeling whatever it is you're perceiving or experiencing. So there's always a running commentary in people's heads. So they don't relate to the world directly and immediately, but through the veil of the self-talk.

And this greatly decreases the sense of aliveness, the sense of how you relate to the outer world, and especially to human beings. For example, if every time I meet another human being, I immediately have certain thoughts and judgments in my head that come up the moment I meet a person, I'm already thinking something about this person.

[Speaker 2] (1:06:18 - 1:06:19)

That's right, you've already labeled.

[Speaker 1] (1:06:20 - 1:06:27)

I'm already labeled, and so I'm no longer really in communication with that person, I'm in communication with my own labels.

[Speaker 2] (1:06:27 - 1:07:11)

Yes, and what you said to us last week, and you also say in this chapter, even a stone and more easily a flower or bird could show you the way back to God and the source to yourself when you look at it or hold it and let it be without imposing a word or mental label. And what you were saying in last week is that if you can learn to do that in nature first, stop labeling things, just feel the essence and presence of things, it allows you then to be able to gradually move into doing that with people. Because so often we don't engage in presence with people, we've already labeled them and labeled the situation, and so we're reacting out of the situations and not out of what's actually happening.

That's what you're saying.

[Speaker 1] (1:07:11 - 1:07:39)

Yes, we've already put people into mental boxes, and so we no longer experience them as in their full aliveness. We have desensitized ourselves through this continuous mental conceptualization, we have desensitized ourselves to the aliveness of other human beings. Because the moment I put a label on another human being, I've already desensitized myself to their life.

[Speaker 2] (1:07:39 - 1:07:57)

So you say the quicker you are in attaching verbal or mental labels to things, people or situations, the more, on page 26 everybody, the bottom, the more shallow and lifeless your reality becomes, and the more deadened you become to reality, the miracle of life that continuously unfolds within and around you.

[Speaker 1] (1:07:57 - 1:08:41)

Yes, I go for a walk every day in the little forest at home, and often I encounter people who are jogging or friends going for a walk, and most people, some are listening to things on their headphones, whatever it is, and they're talking to their friends, and very few people are actually truly present there as they walk through this beautiful forest. And this is a spiritual practice, and I recommend that people, whenever they go out into nature especially, practice being very alert so that they can perceive the trees, the flowers, the plants, the sky, without too much mental interference.

[Speaker 2] (1:08:42 - 1:09:03)

That's so interesting, because when I used to run all the time, I'd have all these people who'd run with their headphones, and I'd say, what are you listening to? And even now, working out, I like just being and feeling the, you know, my feet on the pavement and, you know, taking it all in. I like just sort of being with myself, and I find that the headphones and all that, it's a distraction for me.

[Speaker 1] (1:09:03 - 1:09:26)

Yes, yes, yes. So that's a great practice. It's a good practice.

Later, but you can, even without leaving your home, you can practice even if you have a potted plant at home in your room. Look at the plant just for a few seconds, 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and just bring your attention to the sense perception, and truly look without mentally saying anything about it.

[Speaker 2] (1:09:26 - 1:09:30)

Well, Heather from Vancouver Island, Canada is on Skype. Hello, Heather.

[Speaker 10] (1:09:31 - 1:09:35)

Hello, Oprah. I'm honored to be here speaking with you today.

[Speaker 2] (1:09:35 - 1:09:37)

I think this is fun, okay?

[Speaker 10] (1:09:37 - 1:09:56)

Okay, go right ahead. Mr. Tolle, I'd like to commend you on a spectacular book. I found it thought-provoking, and questions arose for me.

For example, when we get free of the ego, where does that energy go? Good question.

[Speaker 1] (1:09:56 - 1:11:10)

Good question. Yes, thank you. The energy that was used up by the ego.

Now, what is the ego? It basically consists of compulsive, conditioned thought processes that we are not aware of. So we identify so closely with our stream of thinking that we don't even know that we are thinking.

So all this energy is used up in continuous, to a large extent, useless thinking. Even psychologists have found out that 90, even psychologists who are not interested in spiritual things, they looked at the nature of human thought, and they discovered that 98 or 99 percent of our thoughts are quite useless and repetitive. They're not really needed.

So where does that energy go? That energy that then becomes freed from thinking and becomes presence, which is a new dimension. Well, not entirely new, because almost everybody has had glimpses of presence, but it is a dimension of consciousness that most people still don't know exists.

And really, this is the essence of the whole teaching.

[Speaker 2] (1:11:10 - 1:11:35)

And everybody's had glimpses of it. I'm sure you have too, Heather, and everybody who's listening to us. Everybody's had just that little moment where everything is okay, where you have just a moment of bliss, where there's nothing particularly going on that would cause you to feel that, but there's a sense of an awareness that causes you to have, as you said, a glimpse of something bigger than yourself.

[Speaker 1] (1:11:35 - 1:11:55)

Yes, it can come accidentally. Sometimes it comes into people's lives accidentally, and suddenly you feel a deep sense of inner peace and aliveness. And all rightness.

Yes, and not because something particular has happened. So there's no external cause for it. It's causeless joy, one could say.

[Speaker 2] (1:11:55 - 1:12:03)

That's happened to you, Heather? Has that happened to you? Occasionally.

Yeah, occasionally. Yeah, and then you wonder, how did that happen so I could make that happen again?

[Speaker 1] (1:12:03 - 1:12:47)

Yes, it can also happen when you're engaged in very strenuous physical activity. So that requires all your attention, like climbing a mountain. So you need to be, when you're climbing a wall, you need to be totally present every moment.

If you lose presence and start thinking about what you're going to do when you get down from the mountain, you'll probably have an accident. So certain activities, very strenuous activities, require absolute presence. And some people become actually addicted to dangerous activities because they feel much more alive in those moments.

Because you need to be fully present. Yes, the reason why they feel so much more alive is because they're thinking almost nothing at all.

[Speaker 2] (1:12:47 - 1:12:52)

Because you have to be present in order to climb a mountain or to do strenuous activities.

[Speaker 1] (1:12:52 - 1:12:54)

Your attention is absolutely there.

[Speaker 2] (1:12:55 - 1:13:17)

All right. All right, Heather, did that answer your question? Yes, it did.

Thank you. Thank you so much from Vancouver Island, Canada, Heather. Well, Heather introduces this whole idea of the illusory self that you talk about on page 27.

You say the word I embodies the greatest error and the deepest truth, depending upon how it is used. What do you mean by that?

[Speaker 1] (1:13:17 - 1:13:55)

Yes. Usually when people say I, they refer to what I call me and my story, which is your personal history that you identify with as yourself. So everybody has a story, of course, because everybody has a past.

Now, most people are completely identified with the story that is their successes, their failures, things that happened to them, things that they acquired. They see themselves as a victim. They see themselves as successful.

Whatever it is, there is a certain story that develops.

[Speaker 2] (1:13:55 - 1:14:07)

Because when you ask me, who am I? That's what I'm going to tell you. My story, my successes, my failures, where I was born, what I did, what my mother did or didn't do.

That's who we think we are.

[Speaker 1] (1:14:07 - 1:16:09)

That's right. Now, what I'm saying is and what all spiritual teachings point to is that that ultimately is not who you are in your essence. It is no more than a collection of memories.

And, of course, memories are thoughts. It is no more than a bundle of thoughts that you identify with and that you believe to be who you are. So that becomes an entity almost, a mind-made entity, a sense of self, like a phantom entity that lives with you that you then refer to as myself.

So you have me and myself. For example, in Greek mythology, we have the interesting story of Narcissus. Narcissus was a young man who lived, how the story goes, mythology, of course, always embodies some truth that goes beyond the personal.

Narcissus happened to be walking somewhere and he saw, suddenly he looked down and he saw his own image in a pool of water. At a time, of course, they didn't have mirrors at the time, so it was a surprise for him to see himself reflected in a pool of water. And the story goes that he fell in love with himself.

My view is that, actually, a better translation of the story is that he became obsessed with himself. And that, to me, signals the beginning of the human ego. It is to have a mental image in your head, ultimately, not out there, that's just the story, a mental image in your head that you regard as yourself.

And that mental image is the mind-made me that consists of memories, things that happen to you, things, failures, successes, opinions, all kinds of things. I've described them in the book. Together, make up this ill.

[Speaker 2] (1:16:10 - 1:16:15)

OPRAH WINFREY Well, if I'm not the memories, and I'm not the things that happen to me, and I'm not my story, then who am I?

[Speaker 1] (1:16:15 - 1:17:33)

THOMAS KUHN That's the question. And, in fact, who am I is actually a question that in some spiritual, Eastern spiritual teachings is used as a kind of mantra or pointer that you repeat to yourself in a meditation setting. So you sit down and you ask yourself, "Who am I?" And you're not supposed to answer that question.

You leave the blank after the question. In that blank, in that empty space, if it works, if this practice works as it should, you suddenly get a sense of your own presence that has nothing to do with your thought processes. Your own sense of conscious presence, your beingness, your presence, part of which is actually also your physical presence, but as a sense of aliveness.

Every cell of the body becomes part of that sense of presence and aliveness. So as we sit here, we can perhaps see if we can get a little glimpse of that, a glimpse of our own presence, which, again, is nothing to do with thinking. It is deeper than thinking.

[Speaker 2] (1:17:33 - 1:17:35)

OPRAH How do we get a glimpse of it sitting here?

[Speaker 1] (1:17:35 - 1:17:53)

THOMAS KUHN We get a glimpse of it. I recommend that see if you can feel the inner aliveness in your body as you sit here. Is there any sense in which you can feel that there is an aliveness in every cell of the body?

[Speaker 2] (1:17:54 - 1:17:56)

Now, if peopleÖ OPRAH But isn't my mind thinking that?

[Speaker 1] (1:17:56 - 1:17:59)

THOMAS KUHN Your mind may be thinking, yes, of course, I'm alive.

[Speaker 2] (1:18:00 - 1:18:11)

OPRAH Like in the book, you say, feel the aliveness in your hands. Okay. When I go to feel the aliveness in my hand, I can't feel the aliveness in my hand unless I had a mind in which to feel that.

[Speaker 1] (1:18:11 - 1:19:02)

THOMAS KUHN No. So if you close your eyes and you hold out your hand like this, and then the question— OPRAH Feel the vibrating sensation in your hand. THOMAS KUHN Yes.

You ask yourself, for example, I always have this exercise for people who have no idea what I'm talking about when I talk about inner body. So you hold your hand and close your eyes and then ask yourself, how, without touching anything and without moving my hand, how can I know whether my hand is still here? How can I know that?

Now, your mind might say, of course I know it because I remember seeing it just a few seconds ago. That's it. You feel the inside is alive.

A subtle sense of warmth or tingling, a subtle sense of aliveness. That is the beginning of getting in touch with your inner body, the energy field.

[Speaker 2] (1:19:02 - 1:19:05)

OPRAH But I need my brain to do that, though.

[Speaker 1] (1:19:06 - 1:19:41)

THOMAS KUHN You need your conscious attention to do that, but not thinking. OPRAH Not thinking. THOMAS KUHN No.

That's the difference. You need attention, which is consciousness. Yes, you need consciousness to feel it, but the consciousness then moves from where it usually is, just as it did when we started today with becoming aware of our breathing.

Now the consciousness moves into the hand. And if you can feel your hand, if you can feel one hand, you can also feel the other hand. If you can feel both hands at the same time, you can perhaps also feel your both arms.

And if you can feel the arms, perhaps you can also feel your feet.

[Speaker 2] (1:19:41 - 1:19:47)

OPRAH Okay. And as I begin to feel that and everybody who's with us around the world feels that, then what?

[Speaker 1] (1:19:47 - 1:20:47)

THOMAS KUHN This means the inner body, which we also could call, what we're doing is we're practicing embodiment. This keeps you in the present moment and keeps you present. It keeps you out of your thought processes.

OPRAH Out of your thought processes, thinking about what I need to do tomorrow. THOMAS KUHN Yes. And it takes you out of ego, because the ego lives in your thought processes, consists of thought processes.

So the moment you enter the inner aliveness of a body, there's a sense of self that is deeper than thinking. You are that aliveness that you feel. You are that alive presence.

And this applies whether your past or your personal history is a happy one or an unhappy one. For most people, it's a very mixed story, but no personal history is entirely happy. OPRAH Right.

With very few examples, and then you just have to wait a little while until it becomes unhappy again.

[Speaker 2] (1:20:47 - 1:20:49)

OPRAH Even the people who say, I had a great childhood.

[Speaker 1] (1:20:49 - 1:21:18)

THOMAS KUHN Yeah. No, personal histories are all very problematic. And it's not people think, oh, it's only me.

It's everybody. Everybody's personal history. OPRAH Because that's what being a human is.

THOMAS KUHN Yes. OPRAH Okay. THOMAS KUHN So to be able to step out and find a dimension that has nothing to do with your past and your history or whether you are a miserable failure in the eyes of the world or your thought processes or greater has nothing to do with that.

[Speaker 2] (1:21:18 - 1:21:51)

OPRAH I love it when you say, what you usually refer to when you say I, I'm on page 28, is not who you are. By a monstrous act of reductionism, which is a great way of putting it, the infinite depth of who you are is confused with the sound produced by the vocal cords or the thought of I in your mind and whatever the I has identified with. So what do the usual I and the related me, my, or mine refer to?

You talk about when a young child first learns to identify my toy.

[Speaker 1] (1:21:51 - 1:22:33)

THOMAS KUHN Yes. That's the beginning of ego when the child starts to identify with an external object. And you can see when, when the toy is taken away from a child after this identification has happened, after it was, the child thought of it as my toy, there's enormous amount of pain in the child.

The child will start screaming and saying, it's mine, it's mine. So the toy has been taken away. Why is it so painful for the child?

Because it is the beginning of the ego. The ego has lost something that it had identified with. It's a misperception of who one is.

And so it's very painful.

[Speaker 2] (1:22:33 - 1:22:38)

And the child thinks that the toy has something to do with them.

[Speaker 1] (1:22:38 - 1:22:40)

Who they are. That's the identification.

[Speaker 2] (1:22:41 - 1:22:45)

That's why kids go into spasms over a toy and you're going, it's just a toy.

[Speaker 1] (1:22:45 - 1:22:58)

And two days later, they lose interest in it. Right. And so that's the beginning of it.

And then it's That's right.

[Speaker 2] (1:22:58 - 1:23:00)

And when you take it away, they think it isn't.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:00 - 1:23:05)

Then they be, it's like losing a limb because it was, became so much part of who they thought they were.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:06 - 1:23:08)

In the child's mind, that's a part of me.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:08 - 1:23:08)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:08 - 1:23:10)

And then we grow up.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:10 - 1:23:11)

And of course the process continues.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:12 - 1:23:13)

When we grow up, our toys just get bigger.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:14 - 1:23:14)

They get bigger.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:15 - 1:23:17)

And we cry because I lost mine.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:18 - 1:23:34)

External possessions. Yes. But it's, of course, possessions is an important part of all the things that people identify with that become part of their identity.

But there are many other things apart from possessions. Right. For example, social position, how others see you.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:34 - 1:23:45)

Because you say other things the eye identifies with is nationality, race, religion, profession, mother, father, husband, wife, so on.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:45 - 1:23:45)

Roles they play.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:45 - 1:23:46)

Roles they play.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:47 - 1:23:52)

Opinions they hold. You can see, for example, when people are.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:52 - 1:23:57)

But these are roles. They are actual roles. You know, people are mothers and fathers and.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:57 - 1:23:57)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:23:58 - 1:23:58)

Yes.

[Speaker 1] (1:23:59 - 1:24:06)

And now it's important, of course, to fulfill the functions that you have in this world. And mother and father are important functions as opposed to roles.

[Speaker 2] (1:24:06 - 1:24:09)

Your nationality and your race and your religion.

[Speaker 1] (1:24:09 - 1:24:10)

It's fine.

[Speaker 2] (1:24:10 - 1:24:11)

You identify with those things.

[Speaker 1] (1:24:11 - 1:25:02)

It's fine to honor all these things. But if that's all you have, then you are lost in a surface reality that always turns into becomes painful and turns into conflict. OK.

You can see, for example, when people are discussing and if somebody questions somebody's opinion, very often, immediately they become defensive. Right. Sometimes even aggressive or start shouting.

Right. And because opinions, again, is another thing. That's my belief.

Mine. They identify with the thought they hold a mental position. And then anybody who questions that mental position immediately becomes your enemy because you believe you're being attacked.

You're not being attacked, but the image that you have of yourself and the opinion is part of that. The ego believes it's being attacked.

[Speaker 2] (1:25:02 - 1:25:25)

So you're saying that whenever you can see that that's what you're thinking, when you can see the illusion of that, the moment you can see the illusion of it. These are thoughts in my head. This is something I've told myself.

I believe this is something I've told myself that I identify with that when you can see that the seer or the observer is who you really are.

[Speaker 1] (1:25:25 - 1:25:30)

Yes. And the seer or the observer is the presence of the awareness.

[Speaker 2] (1:25:30 - 1:25:32)

So you're saying there's two of us at all times.

[Speaker 1] (1:25:33 - 1:25:42)

Yes. There is the formless awareness and there is the form that a thought becomes. A thought is an energy formation.

[Speaker 2] (1:25:42 - 1:25:42)

OK.

[Speaker 1] (1:25:43 - 1:25:50)

And so that you've just mentioned, the essence is to be there as the awareness when it happens.

[Speaker 2] (1:25:50 - 1:25:57)

All right. I'm going to go to Victoria. Victoria lives in Maui, joins us via Skype.

Victoria, hello. Aloha. Aloha.

[Speaker 6] (1:25:58 - 1:26:53)

Can't wait to get there. Thank you, Oprah. Mr. Tully, for this awesome opportunity. I was diagnosed over 10 years ago with systemic lupus and R.A. And I've been a really active person. But two years ago, I gave up my business. My health deteriorated and I got an aha moment in this book on page 51.

I never realized that I had unconsciously clinged to my illness. And I'm taking this out of the book because I put it to myself because it had actually become the most important part of who I perceived myself to be. How can I undo this identity and how can I stay focused when I'm in excruciating pain from the illness to have the peace constantly and not just fleeting moments?

OK. That's real.

[Speaker 1] (1:26:53 - 1:26:53)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:26:53 - 1:26:54)

That's real.

[Speaker 1] (1:26:54 - 1:29:22)

Yes. Now, the most important thing has already happened, which is you have become aware that up to now you had been identified with the idea of I am sufferer of such and such an illness. So the illness had become thought forms in your head and you had identified with these thought forms and took them to be who you are.

And now the most important thing, your question still is still valid, but realize that the most important thing has already happened, which is the awareness has arisen. So there's a space now between yourself and your thought processes and the image of yourself as a sick person. Now, another thing, in addition, you can do is, for example, no longer talk about your illness to other people except when you visit a doctor.

Otherwise, the more you talk about it to your friends, acquaintances, family members, the more you keep that process going. Empower it. He empowers the disease.

That's right. So if you just take the decision now that from now on, I'm not going to talk about it. And if people ask me about my illness, which they're going to do because they're used, perhaps used to you talking about it, you say, well, it's I'm doing all I can to find healing in this and I'm making good progress.

Go as far as that and don't encourage people to ask you questions and just say that's how it is. No more mentioning my illness. So you begin on the external level, not to talk about it anymore, except when, of course, when you need to talk to doctors.

And that will have also a certain influence on your thought processes. And then you can gradually also refrain from thinking of yourself as a sick person and perhaps give less thought to your illness and focus attention more on well-being. Now, you may ask, well, but if I don't feel good, if I feel it, how can I give attention to well-being?

You can still do that. One way is to see well-being around you in nature, because nature is just an embodiment of well-being.

[Speaker 2] (1:29:22 - 1:29:24)

You have a lot of opportunity to do that in Maui.

[Speaker 1] (1:29:24 - 1:30:03)

Yes, you are the best, you're in the best place. And also there's well-being, even if

certain parts of your body feel unwell or painful. And again, we are coming back to the sensing the inner body.

There are always parts of your body where you can still find well-being in your hands, your arms, wherever. Take some attention into the body and see, where can I most strongly feel, get a sense of well-being in the body, and then take your attention there. So you choose to direct attention to well-being rather than dwelling on the idea of illness.

[Speaker 2] (1:30:04 - 1:30:08)

That does not mean the pain's going to go away, because she said she has physical pain.

[Speaker 1] (1:30:08 - 1:30:54)

The pain may still be there, that's fine. But as far as the pain is concerned, pain unfortunately requires surrender. You need to see that the pain is there, so that you do not generate an additional level of psychological pain, which complains about being in physical pain.

Because if the mind starts to complain about being in physical pain, you have two levels of pain. You have psychological pain and physical pain. WINFREY Got it.

DR. SCHNEIDER Leave physical pain. With physical pain, you just, right now, this is how it is. It's there.

WINFREY Don't resist it? DR. SCHNEIDER Don't resist it. Do what you can, as far as treatment goes, of course.

But don't resist it. Don't create psychological pain on top of the physical pain.

[Speaker 2] (1:30:54 - 1:30:58)

WINFREY Are you following that, Victoria? DR. SCHNEIDER Got it. Yeah, excellent.

WINFREY Got it. Got it.

[Speaker 6] (1:30:58 - 1:31:06)

Makes sense to you? DR. SCHNEIDER You know, it really does. It does, yes.

WINFREY Yeah. DR. SCHNEIDER And I do have a little garden in the back that I go out to a lot.

[Speaker 1] (1:31:07 - 1:31:20)

DR. SCHNEIDER Yes, because there's well-being all around you, and you can almost, one could say, you absorb it from, if you don't, if you can contemplate all these plants and

the intense aliveness around you. Contemplate that.

[Speaker 2] (1:31:21 - 1:31:36)

WINFREY Well, email us in the weeks to come, and let us know how this works for you, Victoria. DR. SCHNEIDER I will. I will, Oprah.

WINFREY Thank you so much, Victoria from Maui. DR. SCHNEIDER Thank you. WINFREY We have Anne from Ireland on the phone with a question.

Anne, hello? ANNE Hi, Oprah. How are you?

WINFREY Hi. Middle of the night there?

[Speaker 7] (1:31:36 - 1:31:39)

ANNE It's 1.30 in the morning. WINFREY Okay.

[Speaker 2] (1:31:39 - 1:31:40)

Thank you.

[Speaker 7] (1:31:41 - 1:32:01)

ANNE And hi, Eckhart. ANNE This book's been so inspirational. I have three young children, five, seven, and nine years old, and motherhood's one of the things that's motivated me to find ways to be happier with myself, because it's so evident that children are influenced by what they experience with you rather than what you actually tell them.

[Speaker 1] (1:32:01 - 1:32:01)

DR. SCHNEIDER Yes.

[Speaker 7] (1:32:02 - 1:32:33)

ANNE And I see that the stress in my life has even had an impact on their health. And I found the ideas in A New Earth helpful in this way because I'm practicing being present with them and really enjoying my time with them, not thinking about work and thinking about the things I should be doing around the house, but just spending time with them and being with them. And I'm seeing the individuals that they really are and who I am.

Are there other ways to introduce these ideas to small children like that? DR. SCHNEIDER Good.

[Speaker 1] (1:32:33 - 1:34:58)

Yeah, that's a very good question. Now, you've already mentioned the most important

thing is your own state of consciousness at home because the children absorb from you your predominant state of consciousness. And if you can be present with children at home, present means to give them full attention.

When you are present, you don't want anything from them. You just give them attention, which could be listening, it could be watching them as they play. Now, many parents don't do that.

They give them attention, but it's always wanting something. They say, do this, don't do that. Now, this needs to get done.

So that is, I call that form-based attention. That has its place, of course. Of course, the children need to brush their teeth.

They need to tidy up their room. This is fine. It has its place, but more is needed.

Your child wants to be acknowledged in his or her being. So it is vital to give the child conscious attention at home. Give the child space to be.

It doesn't need to be long, just a few minutes every day. Be there, be present for the child. That's vital.

Another thing that is important is, there comes a stage in a young child's life when they start asking, they want, the mind wants to absorb concepts. So they start asking what things are called. What's this, mom?

What's that? And so at that point, usually, of course, you have to tell them this is a tree, or this is that, and that's that. Rabbit.

Yes. Bird. Yes.

Yes. And the important thing is so that the child does not, at that stage, immediately lose him or herself in concepts, and then believe that the moment they know that this is a bird, the danger is, the moment you know that this is a bird, you're no longer really looking at the bird. You have the concept of bird in your head, and then you just briefly glance at a bird, and immediately the concept bird comes into your mind, and so you've become deadened to the aliveness that is there in the bird.

Right. And that has been the, unfortunately, the fate of all of us growing up. We had, we had become, we became lost in a world of conceptualization.

[Speaker 2] (1:34:58 - 1:34:58)

Correct.

[Speaker 1] (1:34:59 - 1:35:28)

And so that this doesn't happen to the young child. Of course, you have to tell the child what it is called. Right.

But I would suggest, for example, not to say to the child, this is an oak tree. Say, this is called an oak tree. Because it's not an oak tree.

The oak tree is just a word. When we lose ourselves in concepts, we mistake a word for the thing.

[Speaker 2] (1:35:28 - 1:35:29)

For the thing.

[Speaker 1] (1:35:29 - 1:35:43)

Got it. When I say, this is an oak tree, that's a, it's not an oak tree. The oak tree is just a word.

So I lose my relationship with the oak tree when I believe now I know what it is. And every time for the rest of my life.

[Speaker 2] (1:35:43 - 1:35:45)

And when you believe you know what it is, it loses its magic.

[Speaker 1] (1:35:45 - 1:36:21)

Yes, it loses. Its essence. Magic is a good word.

The word loses its miraculous quality. Yeah. And its aliveness.

So after you've given the child the concept, encourage the child to continue to experience the tree. Encourage the child to touch the bark of the tree and to look, to look at the leaves, see how the sunshine, how the sun shines through the leaves of the tree. Encourage the child to continuously still experience the reality of the tree, rather than dismiss it.

[Speaker 2] (1:36:21 - 1:36:54)

You got that, Anne? You got that? Yeah, I can see, but that'd be very helpful.

Yeah, that would be very helpful. Thank you very much. Let's move on to content and structure of the ego.

On page 34, everyone, if you're following tonight's class as we move through chapter two, chapter two, it's very exciting when you really get these concepts of the ego. You say that the egoic mind is completely conditioned by the past. Its conditioning is too full.

It consists of content and structure. What do you mean by that?

[Speaker 1] (1:36:56 - 1:39:29)

Content is whatever it is that you identify with and that then you take to be yourself. So that varies. Depends what culture you live in.

Depends on your upbringing. It depends on your personal circumstances. Content is different for everybody.

It differs for everybody, although there are certain similarities in the same cultural field, like there are certain similarities that in America or in France or whatever country you live in, there are certain similarities of things that pertain to that particular nationality that we would identify with. Nevertheless, from person to person, yes, it differs. The content differs.

One person may identify with very strongly held religious beliefs and believe that everybody else is evil who does not hold these religious beliefs. That would be a very rigid ego. Or another person identifies very strongly with the company they work for.

And they feel, I've heard stories in Japan where people, when they got dismissed from their job, they committed suicide. They were so identified with their company that when they lost their job, which until recently was very rare apparently in Japan, you would keep your job for the rest of your life, so it became part of who you thought you were. And if they didn't commit suicide, they suffered dreadfully because their identity got taken away.

All that, of course, is pseudo-identity. It's not who you truly are. It's part of the ego.

And all that is content. The structure of the ego basically consists of identification. The ego seeks something or things to identify with.

What it is doesn't really matter. For one person, one person identifies him or herself with a very positive-looking ego, meaning I'm the greatest thing that ever lived. It might be a delusion, probably is, but it's...

Or another person might identify with a very negative ego image, like I'm the most wretched person that has ever lived. Life has treated me so unfairly. I've suffered so much more than you.

Let me tell you about it. Many egos are like that. They are just as strong as egos who think they are the greatest.

So the ego can be predominantly negative, it can be predominantly positive, but in either case, it's ego.

[Speaker 2] (1:39:30 - 1:39:39)

OPRAH WINFREY Capsulize for us what, you know, I know the whole chapter is about the current state of humanity being the ego, but can you put in a capsule what it is, the ego?

[Speaker 1] (1:39:40 - 1:39:50)

The ego is a false sense of self based on mental concepts. So that's...

[Speaker 2] (1:39:51 - 1:39:53)

OPRAH WINFREY And our identification with form.

[Speaker 1] (1:39:53 - 1:39:56)

DR. SCHNEIDER Identification with form. These are, yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:39:57 - 1:40:19)

OPRAH WINFREY But why do we have it, though? Why do we have an ego? We're all human.

We all have one, right? We all have one. You say yours...

Last week, you said yours died. Does that mean you don't have one? You said yours died in that moment where you wanted to kill yourself.

I am so miserable. I can live with myself no longer. You said in that moment your ego died.

It never came back. It died forever.

[Speaker 1] (1:40:20 - 1:40:48)

DR. SCHNEIDER Yes. When we say that, it simply means, it sounds like some great achievement or it's not. All it means is I'm no longer identified with my thought processes.

I know when thoughts happen, I know they are just thoughts. I don't look for myself in some opinion that I hold of myself. Some mental concept, including the concept that I am free of ego.

I don't think in those terms because if I had this mental concept, I am free of ego, there would be ego again.

[Speaker 2] (1:40:49 - 1:40:50)

OPRAH WINFREY That would be ego again. Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:40:51 - 1:40:53)

DR. SCHNEIDER And this can happen very easily.

[Speaker 2] (1:40:53 - 1:40:56)

OPRAH WINFREY So ego is any identification with form.

[Speaker 1] (1:40:56 - 1:40:56)

DR. SCHNEIDER Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:40:57 - 1:41:03)

OPRAH WINFREY Because what we really are is the awareness that we are identified with form.

[Speaker 1] (1:41:03 - 1:41:03)

DR. SCHNEIDER Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:41:03 - 1:41:11)

OPRAH WINFREY And the more you can become aware that you are identified with things, you create a space that separates you from the things.

[Speaker 1] (1:41:11 - 1:41:24)

DR. SCHNEIDER Yes. Because the question is, when you are aware that you are identified, who is it that is aware? It is a new dimension of consciousness that comes from a deeper level of yourself.

[Speaker 2] (1:41:24 - 1:41:28)

OPRAH WINFREY But how do we live in the world without things? We have to have things. We have to live in a house.

[Speaker 1] (1:41:29 - 1:41:59)

We have transportation. DR. SCHNEIDER Nothing wrong with things. OPRAH WINFREY We have clothes.

We have to be clothed. DR. SCHNEIDER Nothing wrong with things. Nothing wrong with thoughts.

Nothing wrong with opinions. But the moment you identify with opinions, then you need to defend them. They become part of your pseudo image.

OPRAH WINFREY Right. DR. SCHNEIDER There is nothing wrong with possessing things. But when you become identified, then first of all, if you lose something, immediately you will suffer.

[Speaker 2] (1:41:59 - 1:43:31)

I love when you say, the people in the advertising industry know very well that in order to sell things that people don't really need, I'm on page 35, everybody, they must convince them that those things will add something to how they see themselves or are seen by others. In other words, add something to their sense of self. They do this, for example, by telling you, you will stand out from the crowd by using this product, and so by implication, be more fully yourself.

You say, in so many cases, you're not buying a product, but an identity enhancer. I thought that was so fantastic. OPRAH WINFREY Designer labels are primarily collective identities that you buy into.

They are expensive and therefore exclusive. If everybody could buy them, they would lose their psychological value, and all you would be left with would be their material value, which likely amounts to a fraction of what you paid. Interesting, because I mean, I've been in situations, we even see it in the magazines now, especially for the Oscars or Emmys or whatever, the women are lined up in their gowns.

There used to be a time when I first went on the red carpet of the Oscars, people were interested in the movie you were doing. Now they want to, everybody asks, the paparazzi shouts, what are you wearing? Who are you wearing?

Who did your gown? Where are the jewels from? It's all about the designer label and who got to wear what, and so our whole society to an extent is based on this.

What do you have? And is it exclusive?

[Speaker 1] (1:43:31 - 1:43:52)

Yes, you can see it. I suggest sometimes to go through a magazine or watch the TV commercials from that point of view to see how often you are actually identified, hold an identity rather than the emphasis on the identity rather than the product. The identity enhancers.

Yes. Okay.

[Speaker 2] (1:43:52 - 1:44:32)

Let's see some of the questions you're sending us now on email. I have Debra in Mandeville, Louisiana. Okay.

Who says, I'm having difficulty transitioning from the beauty of my youth to living with a face and body that has aged. How do we let go of that kind of possession or obsession, especially as a woman in a society obsessed with youth and beauty? Fantastic question, Debra.

Fantastic question. Same thing as being attached to the identity enhancers of clothes and things and cars and having, having, having, having. Yes.

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:44:32 - 1:44:54)

That's a hard, that's harder though. It is hard. The, uh, it's particularly hard for people, uh, who are good looking.

Uh, that was never my problem, fortunately, but I had other problems. I had a, I had a huge mind that says I'm the greatest intellectual. That was my identification.

[Speaker 11] (1:44:54 - 1:44:54)

Uh huh.

[Speaker 1] (1:44:54 - 1:45:16)

And then I suffered more and more and finally I had to let go. But so you're, you identify with whatever is the most obvious in your life. So if you have good looks, then you're most likely to identify with that.

Probably even more so for a woman than a man. And so, and that, particularly in our society. Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:45:16 - 1:45:16)

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:45:17 - 1:45:30)

And so for quite a few years, that works quite well. And, but then at some point you realize that the body does get old and time, the monster time does something to the body.

[Speaker 2] (1:45:30 - 1:45:49)

Yeah. I always thought this too. I don't know, Deborah and Manville, but I always thought, uh, pretty women would have a really hard time because if you grow up and that is your identity and everybody says how beautiful you are and you're pretty little girl and you're great and beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

When that starts to fade, then who are you?

[Speaker 1] (1:45:49 - 1:45:49)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:45:49 - 1:45:49)

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:45:50 - 1:46:13)

And this is why it's important, uh, even at an early age, when you still feel very comfortable with your external appearance to already see if you can bring a deeper dimension into your life so that you don't live the rest of your life trapped in the surface dimension. When you equate who you are with your external appearance, which is not going to last.

[Speaker 2] (1:46:14 - 1:46:20)

Well, she says I'm having difficulty transitioning from the beauty of my youth to living with a face and body that is age.

[Speaker 1] (1:46:20 - 1:46:25)

Yes. So the question then perhaps is so what, what to do now?

[Speaker 2] (1:46:25 - 1:46:27)

Yes. How do we let go of that kind of obsession?

[Speaker 1] (1:46:28 - 1:47:58)

So first of all, again, the arising awareness is important that you had been, and to some extent perhaps still are identified with appearance. Right. And then comes in a little thing that we could call acceptance.

Acceptance. When you look in the mirror in the morning, you realize, yes, one can see wrinkles here and there. The skin is not quite as vibrant as it used to be.

And you can see it very clearly. And so some of these people who had been identified, they regard that as a personal problem. They see it as if life dealt them some blow that it's not personal.

It's the destiny of every human being to grow old and to, unless they die prematurely, it's the destiny of every human being to experience the gradual decline of the physical form. So what you're experiencing is the destiny of all humans, all humans that have

ever lived on the planet and will live on the planet. So I suggest, first of all, to practice a little bit of acceptance.

They say that it's not my personal problem. It's the destiny of humanity. It's just my share in that.

And also, with any kind of acceptance comes a little spaciousness. Because here you have the condition.

[Speaker 2] (1:47:58 - 1:48:00)

Yeah, there's a space between resisting it.

[Speaker 1] (1:48:00 - 1:48:00)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:48:01 - 1:48:02)

Yeah. So wanting it to be different.

[Speaker 1] (1:48:02 - 1:48:17)

Yes. So you have the condition, which means I'm getting old or the body is getting old. And then you accept that this is what's happening.

With that acceptance comes a little bit of space around the condition, a little bit of peace around the condition.

[Speaker 11] (1:48:17 - 1:48:17)

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:48:18 - 1:48:21)

And then a very helpful thing.

[Speaker 2] (1:48:21 - 1:48:24)

That is, instead of saying, I hate my wrinkles.

[Speaker 1] (1:48:24 - 1:49:40)

Yes. Yeah. So it's and you can it's the same process.

You look at a flower, you have a flower for a few days and the same thing that's happening to your body happens to the flower after a few days. It wilts or put an apple there and see what the apple looks like three weeks later. It just happens more quickly.

It's the destiny of all form to eventually dissolve. So Deborah needs to come to some acceptance, acceptance and see that it's it's the destiny of all life forms to go through that process. In addition, also, especially for people who have been identified with the external body, because it's been it was beautiful for many years to take attention, even when they're still young to what we've been doing here, take attention into the inner body, the inner aliveness of the body, because that actually does not grow old because you can feel the aliveness when you're 80.

It's the same way that you can feel the inner aliveness when you're 20. So instead of always stopping with the external appearance, spend time sensing the inner body rather than always staying with the external.

[Speaker 2] (1:49:40 - 1:49:58)

When you shared the story in the book, I forgot which page that was the ring story. Oh, the lost ring on page 38. And you told the story of the woman who had was deteriorating and accused her maid of stealing the ring.

And then you asked her the question.

[Speaker 1] (1:49:59 - 1:50:36)

Yes. I asked, do you do you feel diminished in who you are now that you've lost the ring? Do you actually feel diminished in your sense of self?

And at first she said, yes, of course I do. And then she stopped for and then she started going to within. And I asked her what your sense of self take your attention.

What does it mean to feel yourself? And eventually she was able to go deeper within and feel her sense of presence had nothing to do with the ring. In fact, she felt it most strongly because the identification with the external object had gone.

[Speaker 2] (1:50:36 - 1:50:47)

Yes. And I brought that up that story up because you say that as she her body began to fade. Yes.

That her inner light became more luminous that she became.

[Speaker 1] (1:50:47 - 1:51:33)

Yes. Almost light, almost like light shining through. She became I've experienced that several times with people that I have known who got close to death.

They had an illness. They knew they were going to die and they left in a state of acceptance. They accepted every moment.

And those people not only became very peaceful inside because they had relinquished all identification with the external form. All right. And so and then something else that was deeper than the form that all them, all religions really point to that, that in every human being, there is a dimension that we could call the eternal or the sacred formless formless.

[Speaker 2] (1:51:33 - 1:51:43)

Let's go to our Chicago study groups watching our webcast at Borders on Michigan Avenue. Hi, everybody. I hear Sharon has a question, Sharon.

[Speaker 5] (1:51:44 - 1:52:45)

Hi, Oprah. Hello, Mr. Tully. I'm so excited to talk to you.

I have a question. I have close relationships to people who suffer from depression and in talking with them and trying to be useful to my friends when they talk to me about a bout of depression or what have you. I find that there is an inwardness and a strong identity that they have as as people who suffer from depression.

And I wonder what role does the ego play in in depression and to what extent is it helpful to sort of point them toward this definition of the ego, the the the content identity and the structural identity? I mean, or is it unfair for me to to feel that that should be useful, given that, um. You know, there seems to be a strong identification with themselves as as people who suffer from depression.

[Speaker 1] (1:52:46 - 1:53:04)

Yes, that's again brings us back to an earlier question where whether the condition is a physical condition that one suffers from or whether it is a psychological condition that one suffers from, there is the tendency to identify oneself with the illness or with the whatever it is. Right.

[Speaker 2] (1:53:04 - 1:53:06)

I'm a depressed person.

[Speaker 1] (1:53:06 - 1:53:06)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:53:06 - 1:53:12)

And then I'm depressed because I'm identifying with my whole story. Yes. My story is sad.

[Speaker 1] (1:53:12 - 1:53:12)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:53:13 - 1:53:14)

And that would make me depressed. Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:53:14 - 1:53:15)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:53:15 - 1:53:16)

That's what people are saying. Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:53:16 - 1:53:27)

Yes. If you are very strongly identified with with my sad story, which for many people, yes, the story is sad. I had a sad story story for many years until I let go of it.

[Speaker 2] (1:53:27 - 1:53:29)

And you were in depression. You were depressed.

[Speaker 1] (1:53:31 - 1:54:18)

I was that this this unhappy self is not who I am. I could sense the I amness that came from a much deeper level than me and my story and my unhappy self. And I described that as the self that I could no longer live with.

I asked myself, what is that self? Who am I? Am I that self?

No, I am. I am consciousness. I am presence.

I am. I am. So the question, of course, is what do you tell your friends?

Because it's not easy to tell a person that you are identified with an ego image and very likely you will get resistance.

[Speaker 2] (1:54:18 - 1:54:21)

Correct. They'll say, what is wrong with you?

[Speaker 1] (1:54:21 - 1:54:21)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:54:21 - 1:54:24)

Yes. What is your problem?

[Speaker 1] (1:54:25 - 1:55:07)

I would suggest doing it in a more subtle way. And that is perhaps point out the possibility of becoming aware of one's thought processes of thoughts that arise instead of being totally identified with the thoughts. Perhaps you can tell your friend what you have been doing for yourself.

You can tell that it's not threatening to the ego. If you tell something that you have been doing, you've been observing your own thoughts and you are more detached now from your thoughts than you were before. And you realize that thoughts are only thoughts.

They are not who you are. If you can tell them about yourself, that could help.

[Speaker 2] (1:55:07 - 1:55:16)

Yeah. When many times if you're depressed, I think you're so attached to the story. The story works for you.

You know, the idea of being a depressed person.

[Speaker 1] (1:55:16 - 1:55:16)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:55:17 - 1:55:18)

Works for you.

[Speaker 1] (1:55:18 - 1:55:38)

Yes. So it's good. Sometimes depression comes in waves for some people.

So you go through periods and then a good time is when you come out of it. And then is a good time because then you're more aware than when you're down in the depression. Then perhaps talk to you when you see your friend is at that point.

[Speaker 2] (1:55:38 - 1:56:04)

This brings us to something you were saying at the end of last week's session, though, as you're trying to share this information, everybody with your friends. Eckhart said at the end of last week's class that the most you can do is ask yourself, are you ready to awaken? Are you ready to be more present, more alive for yourself?

Because you really cannot bring other people along unless they are also ready.

[Speaker 1] (1:56:04 - 1:57:37)

Yes. But sometimes you bring other people along simply because you embody a different

state of consciousness, even while you sit with them. They may be telling you their sad story, but you don't buy into the sad story, nor do you question the sad story.

You're just there as a spacious, conscious presence, right? No resistance, just conscious presence. All right.

And sometimes that transmits itself. And suddenly the person wakes up for a moment. I had that experience.

I believe I describe it. I don't remember whether it's in this book or in *The Power of Now*. I had a neighbor many years ago who always was close to a nervous breakdown.

Whenever I met her, she would come with extremely complicated stories of what other people were doing to her. And she always wanted something from me to join her in her struggle against other people. One night she was ringing my bell at 10, 30, or 11 at night.

And through the intercom, she said, can I come up with something very important to talk about? So she came up in great distress and said something about she hadn't paid the service charge, and so on, and we had to fight them, and so on. And I found myself going just into a state of alert presence, allowing her to speak, no thinking, just allowing her to say what she had to say, feeling quite peaceful.

And suddenly she stopped talking, and she looked around, and she had brought all these papers to look at all over the floor. Yeah, to verify her position.

[Speaker 11] (1:57:38 - 1:57:38)

Her story. Yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 1] (1:57:38 - 1:58:04)

And suddenly she looked around and said, this isn't important at all, is it? And I said, no. And she said, thank you.

And she got her papers and walked out. And the next morning I saw her, she came to me in the street. She said, what did you do to me last night?

Last night was the first night that I slept well in years and years. The first night after this happened.

[Speaker 11] (1:58:04 - 1:58:05)

What did you do to her?

[Speaker 1] (1:58:05 - 1:58:12)

Now the thing is, I did nothing. I was just there present for her. So there was no doing.

[Speaker 2] (1:58:12 - 1:58:15)

And not buying into the story. Not buying into the story. Not empowering the story.

[Speaker 1] (1:58:15 - 1:58:21)

And not feeding her thought processes, and not even not resisting their thought processes either.

[Speaker 2] (1:58:22 - 1:58:24)

Thank you, Sharon. Thanks, everybody at Borders.

[Speaker 11] (1:58:24 - 1:58:25)

Thank you, Borders.

[Speaker 2] (1:58:26 - 1:58:31)

We have Kathy from Beijing, China on the phone with a question. Hello, Kathy from Beijing.

[Speaker 4] (1:58:32 - 1:59:21)

Hi, Oprah and Eckhart. I just want to say this is huge that we can have this one conversation around the world. I'm a girl from Duluth, Minnesota, living in Beijing, China, and I'm talking to Oprah in Chicago and Eckhart.

Go ahead. My question is, I lost 30 pounds in the last year, and for me it has been spiritual work. It's not just on the surface weight loss.

And now my friends are asking me about it and how I did it. And I'm wondering how to explain that it is this whole spiritual process. It's not just what you eat and how you exercise, but for me it's been life-changing.

And they look at me like I'm like mentally ill when I try to explain all of that.

[Speaker 2] (1:59:23 - 2:00:03)

A friend of mine and I were talking about this the other day, about allowing yourself to be fed from the energy that's already there inside your body. I know what you're talking about. I know you know.

Yeah, checking in, being conscious, aware of what you're feeding yourself, and aware of how you are in touch with your body to give your body just what your body needs. And so then it becomes not about the diet and the food and how many reps you did, but

about being aware. Right, yeah.

[Speaker 4] (2:00:03 - 2:00:09)

But most of the world is focused on how it's just the surface, what you eat. Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (2:00:09 - 2:00:27)

Yes, it's being in touch with the body helps greatly because the body knows what it needs. Really, the overeating happens because it's part of the ego, the unconsciousness, which seeks a substitute for the sense of aliveness.

[Speaker 2] (2:00:27 - 2:00:40)

Yeah, I can say that for sure. And you know that too, right, Kathy? Yeah, now I know too.

Yes, yeah. Well, now you know how to explain it to all your friends. Thank you.

It's so cool talking to you from Beijing. What time is it there?

[Speaker 4] (2:00:41 - 2:00:50)

It's nine o'clock in the morning and I am able to watch it successfully this week. I was like others and didn't get it last week, but oh, we're still up and out.

[Speaker 2] (2:00:50 - 2:01:07)

That's great. I know I have all listen. I have the Skype people and the limelight people and the move people and Oprah.com people. And I just walked through the hall as I we started this and I said to all of them, may the force be with you. And this is my this is what I'm doing. Hello.

[Speaker 4] (2:01:08 - 2:01:10)

You can make things happen.

[Speaker 2] (2:01:11 - 2:01:49)

OK, thank you so much. OK, bye. Thank you so much.

I want to go back to the identification with things, because that is an issue for so many people. The unchecked striving for more, for endless growth, you say, is a dysfunction and a disease on page thirty seven, like the cancer cell whose only goal is to multiply itself, unaware that it's bringing about its own destruction by destroying the organism of which it is a part. I heard we had a shopaholic on Skype.

I saw that earlier. Did we bring her back? Yeah.

Isn't that. Yes. OK, we have Joyce from Minnesota who is Skyping us.

Joyce, what is your question? I thought I thought this applied to you.

[Speaker 3] (2:01:50 - 2:02:12)

Yeah, yeah, it does. And unfortunately, unfortunately, it applies to my son as well. Last week he came home from kindergarten and I said, I'm so happy to see you and I'm in such a good mood.

And he said, oh, good. Does that mean we get to go shopping? And I thought it's rubbing off on him.

So what my question is, is how do I reverse that process in him?

[Speaker 2] (2:02:12 - 2:02:20)

Oh, well, first of all, let me ask you this. You're reading the book, correct? Yes.

Right. So you've gotten through Chapter two already?

[Speaker 3] (2:02:21 - 2:02:21)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:02:21 - 2:02:24)

Yes. So when you read that, did you see yourself in the pages?

[Speaker 3] (2:02:25 - 2:02:38)

I did. The one that the aha for me was in seeing of who you are not. That your real self emerges through something along those lines.

[Speaker 2] (2:02:38 - 2:02:52)

My favorite quote and one of my favorite quotes in this chapter is when you can no longer feel the life that you are. Yes, you are likely to try to fill up your life with things. Yes.

Would that be what you're trying to do?

[Speaker 3] (2:02:52 - 2:03:26)

That was me. I've since I've started reading this book, I've gotten so much better. I I I'm not searching for that thing anymore.

I think I was trying to find my identity in things. And since I've stopped that and I really

don't have any interest in that anymore, I've discovered so much more about myself. I'm artistic and I'm doing sculptures and just things I never did before.

So it's working out great. I just want to know how to enforce that in my son as well, since he's only five.

[Speaker 1] (2:03:27 - 2:03:56)

Oh, well, now the most important change has already happened in you. So you've become aware of the old pattern, you've gone beyond it. And it's inevitable that now this will even if you don't say anything, it will transmit itself to your son also when after a while your son sees that the importance that you give to acquiring things has diminished, then he will also reflect that this is how it works with young children.

[Speaker 2] (2:03:57 - 2:04:20)

It will take some time. Since he's been a baby, you've been a shopaholic. That's the way you described yourself to our producers.

And so that's what he has seen. That's what he's taken in. That's what he identified he identifies with as pleasure.

And when you when you say I'm in a good mood and things are going well, well, let's go shopping, mommy, because that's what he's already always done.

[Speaker 1] (2:04:20 - 2:05:20)

Yes. Another thing that that perhaps you could do is to point out things to him that are of intrinsic value that you cannot buy. So, for example, the natural world to whatever you see out in nature is of infinite intrinsic value and you can't buy it.

Don't pick flowers, for example. Don't encourage him to because that's the acquisition instinct, the instinct to oh, I want that for myself. Why not allow the flower to be there and enjoy it for a few seconds as you look at it?

So point out things and engage in activities, perhaps, that involve nature and see that is of greater value than anything that you see in the shopping mall. And it doesn't mean that you don't buy anything anymore. Occasionally, you may come across something that looks truly beautiful, that speaks to you, and you may acquire it, but it's no longer compulsive.

[Speaker 2] (2:05:20 - 2:05:26)

You say we need to honor the world of things, not despise it, but we cannot honor things if we try to find ourselves through them.

[Speaker 1] (2:05:27 - 2:05:27)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:05:27 - 2:05:28)

And how do we honor them?

[Speaker 1] (2:05:29 - 2:06:13)

You honor them by giving them attention. I sometimes I have a few possessions that I love and I sometimes I just hold them, look at them, they're beautiful to look at. If they if somebody stole them, that's fine.

Somebody else wants them more than I, it's fine, you let go. There's no identification, but there can be enjoyment in things. You can enjoy a beautiful, you might come across a beautiful picture and you buy it.

You might come across a beautiful fabric, whatever it may be, you see beauty there. And sometimes it will be enough to acknowledge beauty in a shop window and say, oh, isn't that beautiful? Of course, I don't need it.

And you walk on and you can. And that's what there's a lot.

[Speaker 2] (2:06:13 - 2:06:24)

There's a lot of thought I never had. There's a lot of freedom. It's beautiful.

Let's leave it there. I can just admire its beauty. What about that, Joyce?

It's beautiful. Let's leave it in the window.

[Speaker 1] (2:06:24 - 2:06:26)

It's the same as the flower. You don't need to pick it.

[Speaker 3] (2:06:26 - 2:06:29)

That's that's a thought. Yeah, that's a good one.

[Speaker 1] (2:06:29 - 2:06:54)

Enjoying you can you can walk around. Occasionally I don't do it anymore, but I sometimes would enjoy walking around a few stores or when I lived in London, I would sometimes walk down Regent Street, all these beautiful stores, window shop, window shopping, look in. Oh, nice.

Would I want to buy it? No. Even if I can just accept that it's beautiful and beautiful and

then let it be.

[Speaker 2] (2:06:54 - 2:07:02)

Thank you, Joyce. Thank you so much. We have from India.

I don't know the name of this country. Priyanka.

[Speaker 1] (2:07:02 - 2:07:03)

Sri Lanka.

[Speaker 2] (2:07:03 - 2:07:19)

No, the person's name is Priyanka from Mumbai, India. When we try to change our bad habits for good, then aren't we trying to resist rather than accept ourselves? When we try to change our bad habits for good, aren't we trying to resist rather than accept ourselves?

[Speaker 1] (2:07:20 - 2:08:13)

Yes. It's not that you change your bad habits. The bad habits drop away when you bring awareness to them.

So it's not me trying to change something inside me. But when you bring awareness to old conditioned forms of behavior or thinking, when you bring awareness to it, those old conditioned forms of behavior or thinking, after a while, drop away by themselves. So it's not me trying to bring about a change.

It's the arising awareness, and then change happens. Like the lady we just talked to, she read the chapter on shopping, and that immediately brought her to this point of awareness. And with the awareness, the compulsion immediately lessened.

[Speaker 2] (2:08:14 - 2:08:42)

You talk about the illusion of ownership on page 42. You say the ego tends to equate having with being and lives through comparison. And you use a quote from the Bible that Jesus said, blessed are the poor in spirit, Jesus said, for theirs will be the kingdom of heaven.

What does poor in spirit mean? No inner baggage, no identifications. I never knew that's what poor in spirit means.

How did you come to that interpretation of what poor in spirit means?

[Speaker 1] (2:08:42 - 2:09:35)

There was a time after I went through this inner shift, it must have been three years later, I was visiting my mother, and she had a New Testament on her shelf. I picked it up, and I started reading. I could suddenly see the truth that was hiding there, and that in many cases, the conventional interpretation was the superficial one of what Jesus had said.

And that was one of the things that I immediately saw when he said poor in spirit, I realized it's to do with not carrying stuff inside, so that your spirit is very light, it has no burden. And so there were many things at that time I read, and I suddenly saw, oh, he was talking about awakening, and about living in that free state of consciousness. Wonderful, suddenly to be able to read it, and suddenly it all makes sense, which before hadn't made sense.

[Speaker 2] (2:09:35 - 2:09:45)

You also talk about renunciation of possessions will not automatically free you of the ego, that there are people who have renounced all possessions, but have a bigger ego than some millionaires.

[Speaker 11] (2:09:45 - 2:09:45)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:09:45 - 2:09:53)

So if you take away one kind of identification, the ego will quickly find another. For instance, I'm a more spiritual person than you are.

[Speaker 1] (2:09:53 - 2:09:53)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:09:53 - 2:09:54)

You see this all the time.

[Speaker 1] (2:09:55 - 2:09:56)

Yes. So it's identification.

[Speaker 2] (2:09:57 - 2:09:59)

People use their religion to say I'm better than you are.

[Speaker 1] (2:09:59 - 2:10:32)

Yes. Or even an image of myself as a spiritual person. I'm more spiritual than you.

For example, there could be theoretically, you could have a man driving a Rolls Royce, and then in the same street, a man riding a bicycle. And it is quite possible, not necessarily, of course, it could be the other way around, but it's quite possible that the man on a bicycle may have a bigger ego than the Rolls Royce, if he thinks of himself as spiritually superior to the man in the Rolls Royce. And so the ego compares itself always to others.

[Speaker 2] (2:10:32 - 2:10:32)

Yes.

[Speaker 1] (2:10:32 - 2:10:35)

In order to find some superiority somewhere.

[Speaker 2] (2:10:35 - 2:10:45)

Yes, because another favorite quote is that anytime you feel yourself superior or inferior to anybody, it is always your ego.

[Speaker 1] (2:10:45 - 2:11:17)

Yes. And that's very interesting. You can observe yourself then in many situations, because the ego always looks out when you come into a group of people or you meet new people, and it wants to position itself somewhere.

Am I better looking than this person? Or am I more knowledgeable than this person? Or am I more wealthy than this person?

Or is this person more wealthy than me? So it tries to position itself, and that then leads either to a sense of superiority or inferiority, and both are ego.

[Speaker 2] (2:11:18 - 2:11:42)

Yes. Well, what made me also think about one of the situations in our country in particular, here in the United States, is that people live lives in debt. They're indebted, credit card debt, overwhelmed by debt, because of what you talk about on page 46, wanting, the need for more.

Wanting keeps the ego alive much more than having. Let's talk about that.

[Speaker 1] (2:11:42 - 2:11:44)

Now, that's again a structure of the ego.

[Speaker 2] (2:11:44 - 2:11:45)

Yes.

[Speaker 1] (2:11:45 - 2:12:08)

Because we've been talking about content and structure, and one of the main structures of the ego is it is never satisfied. Satisfied. So, for example, when you have attained a goal or attained something that you wanted.

I got a nice house. Not a nice house. Nice things in the house.

And after a little while, it no longer satisfies you, and that's always a sign that it was an egoic goal.

[Speaker 2] (2:12:08 - 2:12:10)

Because I now need nicer things.

[Speaker 1] (2:12:10 - 2:12:44)

Yes. And I need more square footage. Yes.

Yes. So nothing satisfies the ego for long, and therefore, it needs to continue to look for more. And of course, and this is to do also with the ego's need for future, because it's only by attaching undue importance to the future, because it's looking for more in the future moment.

It seeks to complete itself at some point, it wants to attain something in addition to what you already have.

[Speaker 2] (2:12:44 - 2:12:50)

So, what do we do about that and begin to be satisfied where we are with what we have and who we are?

[Speaker 1] (2:12:51 - 2:14:00)

Well, first of all, to see the illusion of seeking fulfillment in the future. Sometimes people need to have lived for a while to see that that's actually true. Right.

That no matter what you achieve or what you attain, you're not satisfied for long. So what do we do about this? We realize that the thing that is of prime importance in our lives, we had always overlooked, and that's the ego in us had always overlooked that.

And that thing that is of absolutely prime importance in our life is the present moment. The present moment is actually the easiest exit point out of the ego state of consciousness. Because when you're absolutely present in this moment, the ego can't survive.

There's only conscious presence. The ego lives through past and future. It identifies with the past, but it's not a very happy identity.

And it looks to the future where it wants this, that or the other to complete itself.

[Speaker 2] (2:14:01 - 2:14:09)

Well, someone's asked me during the week, someone asked me, what about our past memories that are pleasant? You have happy times, the pleasant memories.

[Speaker 1] (2:14:10 - 2:15:08)

OK. And when you remember those memories, it's also the present moment. So no matter what you remember from the past, when those things happened, whether pleasant or unpleasant, did they happen in the past?

That's what we say, OK, these things happened in the past. But of course, they happened in the now because nothing can happen in the past. There is only the now.

And when you remember something from the past, when do you remember it? Now. And when you think of something that may happen in the future, when do you think of that?

Now. And when that thing actually happens, when does that happen? Now.

So there is no life apart from now. And that is a very important realization for people to have, because the ego continuously overlooks the now. It thinks past and future are more important.

It gives much more importance to past and future. And the now is just almost as if didn't exist.

[Speaker 2] (2:15:09 - 2:15:25)

And what you're saying is that if we can learn to recondition ourselves to be present now, then we can be more alive. Yes. To do whatever it is going to be in the future.

[Speaker 1] (2:15:25 - 2:15:26)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:15:26 - 2:15:29)

Because even when the future gets here, it will only be now.

[Speaker 1] (2:15:29 - 2:15:34)

Yes. The now is the foundation for the rest of your life. Got it.

The rest of your life will also be the now.

[Speaker 2] (2:15:35 - 2:15:42)

Got it. Madeline from Pennsylvania is 13 years old and is on the phone with a question. Madeline?

Hi. Hi. Hello.

[Speaker 8] (2:15:44 - 2:16:11)

On page 47, at the end of the second paragraph, the sentence reads, intense wanting that has no specific object can often be found in the still developing ego of teenagers, some of whom are in a permanent state of negativity and dissatisfaction. By stating this, are you implying that teenagers cannot be awakened, that although I'm reading this book, I may have no chance in reaching consciousness merely because I'm 13 and my ego is not fully developed?

[Speaker 2] (2:16:13 - 2:16:20)

Go Madeline. Go Madeline. I just think the fact that you could ask the question is pretty darn good.

[Speaker 1] (2:16:20 - 2:16:33)

Yes. Now, the first thing, you are more advanced than I was at 13. Yeah, than most of us, I'd say.

I would not have been able to read or understand that book when I was 13.

[Speaker 2] (2:16:33 - 2:16:37)

Are you reading the book, Madeline? Yeah. Okay.

[Speaker 1] (2:16:37 - 2:16:38)

That's quite amazing.

[Speaker 2] (2:16:38 - 2:16:39)

That's quite amazing.

[Speaker 1] (2:16:39 - 2:17:26)

So it certainly does not mean that you cannot be awakened because you're already awakening, because if you are not already awakening, the book would be completely meaningless to you. So there is a new generation growing up and there are more youngsters now than before who may not have to go through the extreme egoic delusion

that we had to go through in our generation. And you may be one of them.

It doesn't mean perhaps that your ego will not develop at all. Your ego will develop. But I don't believe that you will be as trapped in ego as I had to be.

I can't speak for Oprah. I know Oprah is fine now.

[Speaker 2] (2:17:26 - 2:17:30)

Oprah was trapped. Oprah was very trapped, Madeline. Oprah was very trapped.

[Speaker 1] (2:17:30 - 2:17:35)

So your chances are excellent. You're already awakening. It's wonderful to see.

[Speaker 2] (2:17:35 - 2:18:07)

Let me ask you this, though, Madeline. When you just read us that passage at the bottom of page 47, intense wanting that has no specific object can often be found in the still developing ego of teenagers. So what you're saying there is that the ego of teenagers is still in the process of growing.

And also, Madeline, don't you see it in your friends, this sort of intense wanting? Yeah, all the time. Okay.

So I think that's what he was talking about. Yes. He was talking about all of your friends, but not you, Madeline.

[Speaker 1] (2:18:07 - 2:18:11)

Now, Madeline, do you detect intense wanting in yourself?

[Speaker 8] (2:18:11 - 2:18:12)

Yeah, occasionally.

[Speaker 1] (2:18:13 - 2:18:13)

Occasionally.

[Speaker 8] (2:18:14 - 2:18:14)

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (2:18:14 - 2:18:19)

But you're not totally identified because you know it's there. There's an awareness there, isn't there?

[Speaker 2] (2:18:20 - 2:18:41)

Okay. Are you understanding the book, Madeline? Yeah, it makes a lot of sense, actually.

What grade are you in, actually? I'm in eighth grade. Eighth grade.

Okay. Well, great to hear from you. Thank you so much.

Thank you. Were you in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania? That's what I hear.

Yep. Actually. Well, great.

Thank you. Keep reading. Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (2:18:42 - 2:18:42)

Thank you.

[Speaker 2] (2:18:42 - 2:19:19)

Okay. So we're going to check our live emails again. That's pretty cool, isn't it?

Wonderful. 13. I couldn't have listened.

I was in so much trouble at 13. I didn't have... Me too.

Yes. Okay. As we make our way in the world, this is from Japan, Toyohashi, Japan.

As we make our way in the world, being confident, assertive, our characteristics that help us get a job, that big promotion, I realize now that these are traits that are associated with ego. And so the question then becomes, how then does one move beyond the ego? Great question.

How does one move beyond the ego?

[Speaker 1] (2:19:21 - 2:19:23)

Become aware of the ego is the first step.

[Speaker 2] (2:19:24 - 2:19:41)

But can't you still be the biggest jerk on earth and still just be aware of it and say, well, I'm a jerk. Boy, that sure is some big ego of mine. You know, you were talking earlier, I was thinking, you know, you can be in the moment, still being one of those road raging people, road raging jerk in the moment.

[Speaker 1] (2:19:42 - 2:19:58)

Well... Aware that you are a road raging jerk in the moment. It's unlikely that at that

moment you are actually aware.

Really? Because if you're aware, then you cannot be totally possessed. By?

By the ego, by the form, the thought form or the emotional form.

[Speaker 2] (2:19:58 - 2:19:58)

Okay.

[Speaker 1] (2:19:58 - 2:19:59)

If that, if that...

[Speaker 2] (2:19:59 - 2:20:01)

Usually that's the pain body that's taken over.

[Speaker 1] (2:20:01 - 2:21:37)

Yes. If that, if the dimension of awareness is present, you are not totally in the grip of ego. And so, but the quickest way out of ego is to practice as much as possible living in the present moment, which means to give more attention to this moment than to the future or the past.

To make this moment the primary factor in your life rather than future and past. Of course, you still use future and past for practical purposes. It helps to make an appointment to go from here to there.

It's all fine. It works very well. But it means being present...

As much as possible, being open to whatever arises in the present moment. The word that I use, and I think it may be helpful for many people, is make friends with the present moment. Because the ego doesn't, can't do that.

The ego always is antagonistic. At best, it uses the present moment as a stepping stone because it wants to get to the next moment, which promises greater fulfillment at best. But in many cases, the ego actually dislikes the pleasant moment.

It resists the present moment. So, if you can make the present moment into the primary focal point of your life and live, then ego will very quickly diminish in you. Because it cannot survive the present moment.

So, the ego...

[Speaker 2] (2:21:37 - 2:21:38)

That's how you do it.

[Speaker 1] (2:21:38 - 2:22:14)

That's how one moves beyond the ego. Yes. The ego...

Present. So, the ego lives as if... People who are possessed by the ego live as if the present moment were their enemy.

They're stressed. They want to get somewhere else. Whenever you need to, they're doing something, but they really already want to be at the end of their doing.

Yeah. They don't want to be where they are. They'd rather be somewhere else.

They don't want to be who they are with. They don't... It's always a striving away from now, internally.

Yeah. And that's, of course, the dysfunction of the ego.

[Speaker 2] (2:22:14 - 2:22:26)

I just had a moment like that today because I was waiting on somebody to get something ready. And they said, Sorry, we're so sorry. We're going to hurry up.

We're waiting. And I go, No, I took the lesson from the book. No, I'm just here being with myself.

[Speaker 11] (2:22:26 - 2:22:27)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:22:27 - 2:22:32)

Not waiting on anything. Because if you're waiting, you're in anticipation, and you're wanting to be out of that moment.

[Speaker 1] (2:22:32 - 2:22:56)

That's right. Yes. Waiting means you don't like this moment.

Right. Rather have another moment. So, whenever you are waiting, so to speak.

Yes. Why not practice being rather than waiting? Which means completely inhabit this moment and feel your body, perhaps.

Feel the energy. And that's very pleasant to feel that you're alive.

[Speaker 2] (2:22:57 - 2:23:05)

All right. We have one last phone call. A question from Michelle in Philadelphia.

Hello. Hi, Oprah. How are you?

Fine. Good.

[Speaker 9] (2:23:05 - 2:23:07)

Good. Yeah. Hi, Eckhart.

[Speaker 11] (2:23:07 - 2:23:07)

Hello.

[Speaker 9] (2:23:07 - 2:23:34)

I'm just like a little bit so excited that you called me. My question was that I'm a little bit confused with chapter two. I understand the quote, If someone takes your shirt, let them have your coat as well.

But where do you draw the line without getting walked all over? I do not want to be an egotistical person. But at the same time, I don't want to get taken advantage of.

Good question. So, I was having a little bit confusion with that. Thank you.

Yes. Good, good, good. Yes.

[Speaker 1] (2:23:35 - 2:24:46)

All it says is sometimes letting go, there's more power in letting go than in clinging or hanging on to something. So, there are situations when you actually become empowered when you let go rather than when you cling. It does not mean that people walk all over you.

In fact, I say there are situations when you have to say no very clearly to a situation or to a person. But even that no can be of two different kinds. Usually, the no is very negative.

When you say no to a person, the person says, I'll give you a ride home. And you see the person is drunk. Of course, you wouldn't say yes just to be pleasant.

You say no. Now, do you say no with negative energy and in a state of resistance? Or do you say no that is positive?

It simply means a clear and straightforward no, I won't do that. This is very different from the resistance no. I call that the no that is not negative, a high quality no.

True.

[Speaker 2] (2:24:46 - 2:25:50)

It's also looking at the reason why you would cling to the shirt. You can have my shirt if I'll give you the shirt. If the reason why you're holding to the shirt is because you think the shirt is going to give you more value or you're operating from your ego when you're holding on to it.

So, you're saying be able to be in the state of presence and awareness so that you can surrender whatever needs to be surrendered. That does not mean and surrender does not mean allowing yourself to be walked over, but to be fully present so that you can be conscious of what's always going on. Yes.

So, it means in some cases, it's fine to say here, you want it, take it. In other cases, it's not depending upon what the situation is. That's right.

Based upon the truth of who you are in any given moment. Yes. Yeah.

Okay. I got that, Michelle. I got that.

Thank you for asking the question. It helped me to get it. So, let's close with the piece that passes all understanding that you talk about on page 56.

What is that piece?

[Speaker 1] (2:25:51 - 2:26:07)

That piece comes when you live in internal alignment with the present moment, which means what is, whatever is. When you no longer argue with what is, when you don't fight it internally, this present moment already, always is.

[Speaker 2] (2:26:07 - 2:26:09)

Even if it's a situation that you don't want.

[Speaker 1] (2:26:10 - 2:26:57)

Even if you don't want it, it is. You must accept it first. You accept first, and then you take action.

Because that was the mud example you used last week. Yes. Even if you're stuck in the mud.

This is where I am right now. I'm here. And then you take action, but that action no longer arises out of negativity, which is there when you don't like to be where you are, when you don't like this moment.

Always friendly with the present moment, accepting the is-ness of the present moment. Then move on from there. Then whatever action you take is actually empowered by life itself.

When you're in a state of negativity or resistance, your action is not empowered by life. So it's not inspired and much less effective than action that comes out of the state of non-resistance. Right.

[Speaker 2] (2:26:58 - 2:27:15)

It's like last week when we were having problems, which neither you nor I knew until we had finished the class. And I said, we were doing a toast to everybody afterwards for all of their efforts. And I say, I'm going to accept it.

I'm going to accept that we had a breakdown on the web. I'm going to accept it, and now let us correct it.

[Speaker 1] (2:27:15 - 2:27:28)

Yes. And it was everybody's lesson whose computer froze up. It was everybody's lesson to say, well, this is what it is.

And with that comes an inner peace that has nothing to do with what's happening.

[Speaker 2] (2:27:28 - 2:27:31)

Not resisting and banging up the computer. Oh my God.

[Speaker 1] (2:27:31 - 2:27:31)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (2:27:31 - 2:27:32)

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (2:27:32 - 2:27:43)

And that's the peace that passes all understanding, because the peace cannot be explained with reference to external events. It's there because you live in alignment with the present moment. That's the peace.

[Speaker 2] (2:27:45 - 2:28:28)

That is the peace, living in alignment. Before we say goodbye, I'd like to thank you for being with Eckhart and with me. And we'll be here again next Monday at 8 p.m. Central. Don't forget, if you want to experience this class again or tell a friend who missed it, our webcast is available on demand tomorrow for free here at Oprah.com. Is that noon, Dean? Beginning at noon?

Beginning at noon, you can start to download. And if you want to download a podcast of

this class, you can do that tomorrow at Oprah.com and iTunes. Your assignment for our next class is to update your workbook and spend this week rereading and thinking about Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 is all about the core of ego. So do your homework.